A

LETTER

TO THE

Right Hon. Edmund Burke, Esq.

FROM A

DISSENTING COUNTRY ATTORNEY;

IN

DEFENCE

OF

HIS CIVIL PROFESSION,

AND

Religious Dissent.

"*It is particularly becoming, to shew our Justice, and Gratitude,*
"*when those who have deserved well of us, and of Mankind, are*
"*labouring under popular Obloquy and the Persecution of oppressive*
"*Power.*" MR. BURKE, p. 217.

.....

——— "*They have a* RIGHT *to* JUSTICE."
MR. BURKE, p. 87.

Birmingham,
PRINTED BY JOHN THOMPSON,
AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

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MDCCXCI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A LETTER TO Mr. BURKE.

SIR,

YOUR late faſcinating publication has been much read, and is generally admired by a large party among us, and particularly among the clergy; but bad as is the ſpirit of the times, I believe the friends of civil and religious liberty will feel too indignant to ſuffer ſuch principles (though mixed with many good things) to paſs without ſufficient animadverſion.

As one of the *loweſt* of the new dubbed order of "prieſthood," which (according to your plan) you have ſeverely treated *becauſe the loweſt*; I cannot, though no author, and of courſe my name has no authority, reſiſt the inclination of an appeal from your breaſt, "where (you ſay, p. 364) no anger "durable or vehement has been kindled," to your underſtanding; or to a ſafer bar, the middle ranks in ſociety, who, uncorrupted by wealth or rank, and unſophiſticated by courtly manners, are I truſt

too juſt not to hear both ſides. That I may do nothing that has the " air of a fraud," I inform you I am a country Attorney and a Diſſenter, and as I fall in for a double ſhare of your *ſtrong laſh*, I preſume to animadvert only where I feel an intereſt.

I am ſufficiently embarked in my profeſſional employments among conveyances, leaſes, court rolls, ejectments, and writs, &c; to make this undertaking very inconvenient, and can aſſure you, Sir, I enter on it with great reluctance, from a conſciouſneſs of inability to do myſelf and others juſtice: but as Gentlemen of my profeſſion are in general too indifferent to public opinion, and are either too buſy or too careleſs to think of turning authors, I venture on the taſk with a wiſh to *mitigate* though I may not hope to *deſtroy*, the contempt and abhorrence you ſeem to have intended to excite in the public mind againſt both my civil and religious profeſſions. I have had many opportunities of ſeeing and knowing the prejudicial effects of the late faſhionable treatment of both *Attorneys* and *Diſſenters*, and rely on the candour and juſtice of the public (if any will condeſcend to read what I write) to accept rectitude of intention as an apology for inability.

Your great eloquence and fine language, Sir, prove a ſeducing vehicle to very eccentrick and contradictory principles; but your apparent injuſtice and virulence againſt country Attorneys and Diſſenters (for ſo your pamphlet ſeems to be taken)

appears to me extreme: to quote your own words, (p. 166) " nothing ſeems wanting *but the power* of " carrying the intolerance of the tongue and the " pen into a perſecution that would ſtrike at pro- " perty, liberty, and life." " We ſhould not be " men (p. 168) if we did not feel emotions of " indignation and horror on ſuch occaſions, we " ſhould not deſerve the name of free-men if we " did not expreſs them." You certainly know, Sir, as well as myſelf, that ſome Attorneys, and I as certainly know that many Diſſenters " are de- " ſerving (p. 217) of general reſpect, deſerving of " gratitude from me and many others. What I " ſhall ſay of them is a teſtimony as far as my " feeble voice can go, which I owe to truth; when- " ever the queſtion of their unnatural perſecution" (for their treatment of late has been little leſs) " is " concerned I will pay it; no one ſhall prevent me " from being juſt and grateful, the time is fitted to " the duty." As " you love a manly moral regu- " lated liberty" as well as any gentleman, I truſt you will not take amiſs my transferring a part of your flowery language from the cauſe of ſlavery and oppreſſion to that of liberty and juſtice, as I wiſh to undo a part of the mighty miſchief already done by your Reflections, by ſhewing that you have entirely inverted the honour and reſpect due to the two orders of lawyers and prieſts, and greatly miſrepreſented and traduced Diſſenters.

As " a plain man" I ſhall " uſe (p. 7) no poli- " tical ſtratagem nor any policy that has the com-

" plexion of a fraud," but ſhall try to undeceive my readers by fairly contraſting the principles and conduct of lawyers with prieſts, and of ſectaries with the church; that every man may judge for himſelf whether country attorneys can be enemies or injurious to the community, or ſectaries dangerous or unfriendly to general liberty, and the public good; and without " ranſacking (p. 206) the hiſtories of " former ages with a profligate induſtry," ſhall hope to ſhew that a ſpirit of liberty has always ſubſiſted among lawyers in the adminiſtration of juſtice; while among prieſts, liberty and juſtice too, have been ſwallowed up in the ſplendid " rights of " the church."

" Till very lately," and not long before I read your book (p. 79) " I really thought I lived in a " free country, and it was an error I cheriſhed, be- " cauſe it gave me a greater liking to the country I " lived in;" I thought my life, liberty, property, and *reputation* ſafe, and rendered ſacred by a civil conſtitution contrived by inimitable wiſdom, protected and matured by heroiſm and virtue, and wanting only the gradual improvement of humanity and philoſophy to be abſolutely perfect; I conſidered my profeſſion of an attorney, if not honourable, at leaſt not *diſgraceful*, as its chief object was to enforce the execution of laws enacted by a wiſe legiſlature, and kept in a ſtraight line of duty by the ſanction, inſpection, and correction of an honourable bench of judges, univerſally famed for integrity and judicial wiſdom; and every deviation in

us

us puniſhed with an impartiality and inflexibility unknown to any other order of men, without ever exciting even the ſhadow of l'eſprit de corps, that "incurable ſpirit of corporation, which never feels "remorſe, becauſe no one member is obliged to "*bluſh for the whole:*" yet you are pleaſed to call this profeſſion, "another prieſthood," which to me ſeems a diſgrace; for it is an allowed fact, that there is no order except the prieſts, but what laugh at and expoſe, the knaves and fools that may be among them.—Repelling then with abhorrence the diſgraceful epithet, I appeal to the common ſenſe of plain men, whether country attorneys are, or ought to be held (p. 62) "in a very low degree "of repute, as unlearned, mechanical, habitually "meddling, daring, ſubtil, of litigious diſpoſitions "and unquiet minds, *whoſe exiſtence depends* on "whatever renders property *queſtionable*, ambi-"guous, and *inſecure*;" a character fitted only to a raſcal, and as contrary to the very end and buſineſs of an attorney, as to a paymaſter of the forces; an attorney's chief employment being to *ſecure* property, and render it unqueſtionable, and their reputation and conſequent exiſtence, actually depending upon it. I ſhould be at a loſs to find a motive for this miſrepreſentation, were it not obvious that the national aſſembly of France (though the exiſting government of the country) muſt be traduced *per fas aut nefas*; and to malign "country attorneys," bum-bailiffs, catchpoles, and Diſſenters, and to idolize prieſts, might appear to an old ſtateſman, "hack-neyed in the ways of men," a more likely means of

pleaſing a mob in a tory age, and of gaining popularity from a reigning party, than any reforms or impeachments, however juſt or well intended. I ſhould be heartily aſhamed to find you, Sir, had recourſe to ſo baſe a ſtratagem; but all men of ſenſe and integrity muſt ſeverely lament the condition of our country, that makes ſuch ſchemes practicable, while they ſee greater men than yourſelf deſcending to low and vulgar arts, by which they ſucceed in very nefarious meaſures, notwithſtanding the oppoſition of an uncommonly ſtrong party, aided by the good-ſenſe and virtue of the nation.

You admit (p. 61) "that the degree of eſti-
"mation in which any profeſſion is held, becomes
"the ſtandard of the eſtimation in which the pro-
"feſſors hold themſelves;" I cannot, therefore, myſelf, "as a plain man," ſee any poſſible good end you could have hoped for by traducing country attorneys and bailiffs (for you have by no means reſtricted your cenſures) when it is felt by every creditor and every ſheriff, that the buſineſs in which both country attorneys and bailiffs are employed, is ſufficiently unpleaſant and unpopular already, to make it extremely difficult to get the proceſs of the law, and judgments of our courts of juſtice, executed; the ſenſeleſs clamour not long ſince raiſed by inſolvent and fraudulent debtors, and other diſtreſſed men, againſt both, during their application for an inſolvent act (prevented by the virtuous ſternneſs of a great law lord) had apparently

rently over-borne the public reſiſtance, and has doubtleſs contributed to your popularity, as you join ſo large a party in traducing country attorneys and "catchpoles:" on the contrary, I do ſee very obviouſly a pernicious and wicked, and to men of property, a very impolitic tendency, in a conduct that muſt drive men of delicacy, virtue, and property from the profeſſion (at leaſt that part of it) and thereby invite more bold and leſs virtuous men into it. At preſent, moſt of us "country attorneys" have either begun or finiſhed our legal education in town, where, the few years we continue there, we have opportunities of ſeeing and doing buſineſs for the firſt characters in the kingdom; I was myſelf particularly circumſtanced in this reſpect, and among other great men, was ſo fortunate, ſo "ſubtil," or ſo "daring," as to tranſact buſineſs even with yourſelf: but perhaps ſome country attorney may ſince have rendered your property queſtionable, which may make you ſo unmercifully ſevere on this deſcription of men.—Reputation is with many of us a valuable thing; and if we cannot regain it after your caricature of us but by quitting the profeſſion, ſome of us ſhall not be unwilling to do ſo. I can believe there are people in the kingdom ſo weak as to imagine, if there were fewer attorneys (as in Pruſſia, where it has been ſaid there are only ſix) this country would feel vaſt advantage; I would aſk theſe inconſiderate men, whether they buy their goods cheapeſt where there are feweſt ſhops? ſuppoſe, for inſtance, one only in a county, the maſter of it would no doubt be

be uncommonly civil, eſpecially to his poorer cuſtomers! I know ſome of my profeſſion who wiſh there were fewer attorneys, and would not object to an annual certificate of 50l. inſtead of 3l. Individually, I ſhould not regard it; but I abhor the principle, both as a partial tax, and as tending to a monopoly. Your "precurſors," Sir, in the honourable line of abuſe on the ſtill lower orders of the law, the very fag-end, the poor "bumbailiffs "and catch-poles," have ſucceeded marvelouſly in writing them down: for men of property, (and ſuch they ought to be, as they are required to give ſecurity to ſheriffs for a regular diſcharge of their duty) ſeldom undertake the office, becauſe of this ſame general odium: yet for want of ſuch bailiffs, expences of actions are conſiderably increaſed by renewing writs, and in the fees for arreſts; and without both attorneys and bailiffs, (call them bums, catchpoles, or what you pleaſe) our civil conſtitution cannot exiſt, our property and credit cannot be ſecured, nor law and liberty itſelf be maintained. Can you find, Sir, any thing of like conſequence for your ſacred prieſthood, from "the mitred front in courts and parliaments," to the humble curate in our villages? ſome of whom, with luſty leg, and ſtript to their ſhirts, run on a Sunday from church to church, three in a day, to "lead the public mind," ſo ordained (p. 151) by chriſtian ſtateſmen (to prove their own belief) that the goſpel may be preached to the poor; though when they get to the end of their race, have perhaps only Dean Swift's "dearly be-

"loved

" loved Roger"s public mind to direct. In two at leaſt of our neighbouring pariſhes, inſtead of a Roger, it is a woman! and at both theſe places many Sundays, I am informed, there is no individual attends but the parſon and clerk; yet even here the tythes great and ſmall are duly paid, and if there are no Diſſenters in them (as I do not know there are) we have the uſual verdict of the leet, " *All is well.*"

You admit, Sir, (p. 329) that " the dignity of " every occupation wholly depends on the quantity " and kind of virtue that may be exerted in it." And as you (p. 126) " have had experience in a " pretty extenſive and mixed communication with " the inhabitants of this kingdom of all deſcriptions " and ranks for forty years," and (p. 202) " have " endeavoured through life to make yourſelf ac- " quainted with human nature, that you may not " be unfit to take your humble part in the ſervice " of mankind," you may be able to ſee that it is at leaſt poſſible, that country attorneys and bailiffs, ignominiouſly called " catchpoles," may exert a kind of virtue in their different ſpheres, that may dignify their occupations, and make them at leaſt *tolerable*, as well as *neceſſary* members of ſociety. You can allow to your idols the clergy (p. 212) " through all their diviſions, ſome tenaciouſneſs of " their own opinions, ſome overflowings of zeal for " their propagation, ſome attachment of intereſt to " their own corps," " becauſe you are a man, and " have to deal with men, and muſt bear with their

" infirmities

" infirmities till they feſter into crimes;" but I fear you can have none of this " patience and long ſuf- " fering virtue" for any other than prieſts. I, Sir, ſcorn a fraud which confounds the profeſſion with the profeſſor, the law with the lawyer, and ſhall leave the ſacerdotal tribe the high privilege of confounding religion with its profeſſors, and claiming that reſpect for their perſons as a *ſacred order*, which is due only to religion itſelf;—a ſtratagem as baſe as it is wicked, and which endangers chriſtianity itſelf. I am ſorry your " forty years expe- " rience among all ranks of the community," has given you no better knowledge of country attorneys; but we can find an apology for your ignorance of us and our conduct, in your rank or town reſidence; and can feel the applauſe of a good mind amidſt your miſrepreſentation, and the popular clamour againſt us, as exorbitant, extravagant, rapacious, &c.—Every man, Sir, may conſole himſelf that his ſufferings under us are *voluntary*; for none need employ, or of courſe pay us, but thoſe who chuſe; would to God! (forgive this devout wiſh in an attorney) that *I could ſay as much* for the ſacred prieſthood.

But admitting country attorneys are litigious, and that their numerous clients are knaves or fools; yet as we have good and equal laws, adminiſtered by excellent judges, ſurrounded by an independant and moſt reſpectable bar (but who nevertheleſs have not entirely eſcaped your attention on ſome occaſions) we can do little harm; while we have often

often the luxurious pleaſure of informing the ignorant, of extricating the perplexed, and of protecting many a patched coat, and weak and innocent neighbour, when hunted and worried by the ſtrong; among whom are tyrannical and litigious tythe prieſts, with their proctors, the trading juſtices, and gamekeeping ſquires, window-peepers, exciſemen, informers, and oppreſſors of every kind. I can ſay for myſelf, though a country attorney, I never had a law-ſuit with any man, nor ever even tried a cauſe for a plaintiff in the county where I live, and where I have reſided more than twenty years, though I have had my full ſhare of buſineſs in it. Of courſe I ſhall not be thought very litigious, or a bad neighbour. I have, as arbitrator, umpire, or mediator, ended many diſputes or law-ſuits between others; and can ſay with pleaſure, I do not think my ſituation ſingular in my profeſſion, as moſt attorneys of property with whom I converſe; are as averſe as myſelf to litigation, and law-ſuits, and I believe we in general uſe our influence to prevent "village vexation," however you may diſcredit it; but even this diſpoſition has been a ſource of abuſe to "country attorneys." One clergyman had a litigious cauſe with his neighbour for agiſtment tythe, which probably he could get no neighbouring attorney to proſecute, for ſuch ſuits are not very pleaſant *to us*; he however, found an attorney in town, and has the honour of being your precurſor in publicly abuſing "country attorneys." Another clergyman, I underſtand, procured a town

a town attorney to put his adverſary to 7000l. expence on a queſtion of tythes in his pariſh. Country attorneys ought not therefore, Sir, to engroſs the *whole* of your cenſure, if their conduct be cenſurable.

You admit that "public opinion is a great "ſource of public peace," and as your favourites have contrived to confound the profeſſion with the profeſſors, there is ſome danger that the public odium againſt country attorneys and bailiffs, may end in a contempt of the things about which they have dealt; and law itſelf may become contemptible, and may come to be conſidered, even in the houſe of commons, "*as an old woman without* "*a tooth in her gums.*" It would give me infinite pleaſure to find that all the people of England have ſufficiently diſtinguiſhing ears, to ſeparate the profeſſion from the profeſſor; and while they ſee ſtateſmen, prieſts, and lawyers, are ſometimes tyrants, hypocrites, and knaves, they would conſider government, religion, and law, as ineſtimable benefits, though ſome of the profeſſors may be cheats. It would have been an employment as worthy of your great abilities, to have taught "the great vulgar "and the ſmall" of the day, this neceſſary and important leſſon; and to the full as uſeful to the community, as to have traduced a number of worthy men, by a laboured, artificial, tinſelled ſtring of miſrepreſentations.

Till

Till the late application to parliament, I conceived a mere prieſthood, to be in no eſtimation, but with devotees, hypocrites, and fools; and that it was a relick of barbariſm, that John Bull was not yet ſufficiently enlightened to give up, any more than the mob of Tuſcany, are to part with their Madonas; and I had do doubt, that ſtateſmen of every party, conſidered the church eſtabliſhment as an hoſpital for incurables, and ſupernumerary children of decayed or prolific families; and I as conſtantly contemplated the annual act for indemnifying perſons who omitted to qualify under the Teſt Act, as a ſtate interment of the intolerance and bigotry of ancient times, without inviting John Bull to the funeral; I had no conception that a ſingle ſtateſmen was ſo ill informed, or ſo ill intentioned, as to wiſh its continuance; and when the Diſſenters firſt applied for its repeal, I conceived the only heſitation with the legiſlature would be, whether the vulgar were ſufficiently delivered from the fear of ghoſts, hobgoblins, and monks, to bear ſo juſt a ſacrifice, to reaſon, and juſtice. You will judge, then, of my ſurprize and indignation, when I diſcovered the union of prieſts, with corporations, of courtiers with "country clowns," and of ſome turn-coat whigs with tories, to traduce Diſſenters, decry "philoſophy, light, liberality, and the rights of men," and to embrace the Teſt Act, with unuſual ardour, as the main pillar of the church, which, like Dr. Sacheveral, they now pretended was in danger; a church (if by it be meant the clergy) which had borne

borne down the liberties of the country for centuries, and oppoſed the civil power, with an indecency never to be forgotten, or forgiven, till the people themſelves became more enlightened, and the clergy better known, when after alternate oppoſition, wheedling, coaxing, fawning, and craft, without the expected comfort of ſeeing the ſtate overturned, either in the year 1715, or 1745, it found it convenient to fall into the ſtate's wake, and has ever ſince been taken in tow, as a crazy veſſel; not but that their high-flyers, to dignify this neceſſity, gild it with the name of an *alliance*, and may hope perhaps to contract with the ſtate, to become their cat's-paw, in deſtroying ſectaries.

I recollect in the Roman hiſtory, the moſt pious of their heathen emperors, were always the moſt intolerant, and the auguſt ſymbols of the preſence of their gods, the proceſſion of their augers, prieſts, and other ſpiritual underſtrappers, and rabble of cheats, was generally the prelude and ſignal of deſtruction to the wiſe and good, whoſe ſincere virtue would not admit their joining in ſuch ſilly ſuperſtitions, or impure rites. The early chriſtians (the Diſſenters of thoſe days) were thus treated by the eſtabliſhed heathen prieſts, who repreſented the chriſtians as impious neglecters of the holy altars, and ſepulchres, with whom the gods are angry, and for whoſe ſakes the gods afflicted their kings, and their country, by deluges, or earthquakes, and to appeaſe whoſe wrath, the chriſtian Diſſeniers were plundered, and murdered, while

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"the better nature which ought ever to preſide "as approximated to perfection," the eſtabliſhed prieſts, the high magiſtrates of the temple, exalted her crowned fronts in courts and ſenates. And in ſome countries, where chriſtianity (the moſt humble and leaſt aſſuming of all religions) was eſtabliſhed, the prieſts claimed, and actually obtained, characters, and ſituations, more imperious and aſſuming, more injurious and oppreſſive, to their fellow-chriſtians, or fellow-men, than the vileſt deſpotiſm of the heathens; and, however incredible it may ſeem, it appears there have not been wanting ſlaves, and paraſites, among laymen, and even *ſtateſmen*, to plead for and juſtify, ſo impious and horrible a diſgrace to religion and human nature.

Your contemptuous treatment, Sir, of us attorneys, though included in the (p. 65) "other prieſt-"hood of the law adminiſtering the ſacred rights "of juſtice," and your high panegyrics on the clergy, ſo contrary to the ſpirit of the old whigs, at a time too, when licentiouſneſs and hypocriſy ſeem in their zenith; provoke a contraſt of theſe two prieſthoods; which will afford no unfavourable ſpecimen of the comparative importance of the *two orders* even now, and of the degree of eſtimation in which they have been held in paſt ages, by our "enlightened" and wiſe anceſtors, whoſe pious inſtitutions you think we ſhould never depart from, but cheriſh with our *hearths* and our *altars*. I will try to ſtate the two eſtabliſhments in one table, by contraſt, ſo exactly, that my readers at one glance

may ſee how vaſtly one preponderates over the other, in numbers, and revenue, and conſequently in importance; and I ſhall afterwards endeavour to ſhew, how equally the other preponderates in point of public virtue, and general utility; my readers may amuſe themſelves with contemplating their oppoſite employments. I have no red book by me (as I attend no levees) and muſt therefore ſet down by conjecture many numbers and ſums, only premiſing that I ſhall try to keep within bounds.

I. *Church Prieſthood.*			II. *Law Prieſthood.*		
Numbers.	Titles.	Pay. £.	Numbers.	Titles.	Pay. £.
2	Archbiſhops	35,000	1	Lord Chancellor	10,000
24	Biſhops	100,000	12	Judges	32,500
24	Deans	20,000	1	Maſter of the Rolls	2,500
50	Archdeacons	15,000	11	Maſters in Chancery	11,000
200	Prebends	100,000	2	Attorneys General for King and Queen	1,500
100	Canons	30,000	2	Solicitors General for Ditto	750
70	Rural Deans	,000	1	King's Serjeant	100
500	Officers in collegiate Churches, &c.	,000	200	Officers in Courts of Law	,000
24	Chancellors	7,000	20	King's Council	,000
5000	Rectors	1,000,000	500	Barriſters	,000
5000	Vicars	500,000	2000	London Attorneys (*but who pay to the State* 10,000*l.*)	,000
3000	Curates	,000	5000	Country Attorneys (*but who pay to the State* 15,000*l.*)	,000
10,000	Church Clerks	50,000	400	Bailiffs	,000
	Sextons	,000		Bums, Catchpoles, &c.	,000
		£. 1,857,000			£. 59,100

It does not appear material, whether I have erred in any of the particular numbers or ſums, as I have under-rated the revenue of the church on the whole by about 200,000l. the loweſt calculation that I have ſeen being 2,000,000l. and I have included the ſalaries of the church clerks at 5l. in each pariſh (though not generally eſtimated as the church eſtate) but which nevertheleſs is paid by the people. The balance then on this ſtatement in favour of the prieſthood of the church, againſt the prieſthood of the law, is no leſs than 1,797,900l. No wonder then, that *all the reverence* is on the ſide of the church prieſthood.

I have gradated the liſts as I ſuppoſe the church and yourſelf, Sir, will approve, where "archbiſhops "precede dukes," and of courſe, curates precede us "country attorneys." I do not think, however, I have brought the precedency quite far enough; as a church clerk in our adjoining pariſh, a few years ſince, at a town meeting of the farmers, ſtated his opinion of the order of precedency thus, "The king "is at the head, the biſhop next him, he is over "our rector, the rector over the curate, the curate over me, and I over *you all.*" This church clerk's notions were not very far from what happens to *us all.* The parſon ſometimes appoints the church-clerk, and the people always pay him; this ſeems the principal honour the "congregation of "faithful men" have in the church, for they neither chuſe *rector*, *vicar*, nor *clerk*, but they *pay all.*

Having ſaid thus much of the numbers and revenue of the *two prieſthoods*, I would willingly illuſtrate the utility and ſpirit of each order: The apoſtles (whoſe *ſucceſſors** the prieſts call themſelves) are characterized by St. Paul in the Scriptures (a book you do not much quote as authority for your prieſts) as being "abundant in labours, "preaching the goſpel without charge, being the "*ſervants* of all for the goſpel's ſake, as being made "all things to all men, that they might by all means "ſave ſome, as troubled on every ſide, but not diſ-"treſſed, perſecuted but not forſaken, as caſt down "but not deſtroyed, giving no offence in any thing, "that the miniſtry be not blamed, but in all things "approving themſelves the miniſters of God, in "much patience, in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſ-"treſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults, "(perhaps the *church was in danger*) in labours, in "watchings, in faſtings, by honour and diſhonour, "by evil report and good report, as deceivers and "yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as "chaſtened and not killed, as ſorrowful yet always

* I lament that ſome gentlemen of good ſenſe ſhould countenance this unfounded and not very pious pretence of ſucceſſion to the apoſtles, when they muſt know it has been a ſupport to claims of impious or ſenſeleſs men in paſt ages, and is not totally given up even in the preſent. The apoſtles were extraordinary men, endowed with power of working miracles in confirmation of their doctrines, and appointed to give us the canon of ſcripture, this being cloſed, there neither needed, nor can be ſucceſſors without new miracles; nor can there be any new *ambaſſadors* without new credentials. Every man at this day, who has the New Teſtament in his hand, has *the goſpel* as much as theſe men, who chuſe to digniſy themſelves, and their impiety, or nonſenſe, with that name. If by ſucceſſors is meant any thing leſs,—then miniſters are no more the apoſtles' ſucceſſors than every other private chriſtian is ſo.

"rejoicing,

" rejoicing, as *poor* yet making many rich, as having " *nothing* and yet poſſeſſing all things, as having no " reſt in the fleſh, without were fightings (*with Diſſenters no doubt*) within were fears" *(for the hierarchy perhaps.)* I need ſay no more to prove the utility of the *order*, and as " the ears of the people of " England are diſtinguiſhing," I do not attempt to (p. 155) " carry back the clergy to that primitive " evangelical poverty which ought always to exiſt " in the ſpirit, but in the thing muſt be *varied*, " when the relation of that body to the ſtate is altered;" and you will admit, I think, Sir, that the condition of theſe ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, ſince they became *allies* of the ſtate, is *a little varied.* I have only therefore to ſhew theſe people of England, whoſe ears are ſo diſtinguiſhing, that the *ſpirit* of the two prieſthoods of law and religion, *vary* as much as their *pay*; and to prove it, I ſhall not (p. 206) " rake or ranſack the hiſtories of former ages, with " any malignant or profligate induſtry, for every " inſtance of the oppreſſion and perſecution which " has been made by the clergy, or in its favour," but ſhall extract from Lord Coke's Inſtitutes, a favourite law book ſtanding in every country attorney's library (an author that we think has rendered a greater ſervice to this country, than the whole order of prieſts ſince the creation) a few ſpecimens, out of a great many, of a perfect contraſt between the two orders, and the *eyes* of the people of England will be leſs diſtinguiſhing than their *ears*, if they do not ſee to whom they owe the civil and religious liberty they now actually poſſeſs; and were they

juſt, as well as *diſcerning*, it might moderate in ſome degree their violent abſurd abuſe of lawyers, and the ridiculous indiſcriminate reverence in ſome of them for prieſts. I confeſs I ſhall not think it any proof of the diſtinguiſhing ear of the people of England, if they agree with you (p. 155) that "every man in this country *muſt think* it envy and "malignity towards the beginners of their own "fortune, and not a love of ſelf-denial, that makes "ſome look aſkance at honours and revenues, *taken* "*from none*, and ſet apart for *virtue*." that objections are made to the revenue and power of the clergy as contraſted with primitive times. I do not believe that others, any more than myſelf, are neceſſarily worſe than knaves or fools, for remembering that the Founder of our religion declared his kingdom to be not of this world; that he himſelf had not where to lay his head; that his apoſtles, Peter the the fiſherman, and Paul the tent-maker, worked with their own hands, that they might not be chargeable to any; though we ſee *their ſucceſſors* becoming (p. 154) "high magiſtrates in the church, "with 10,000l. a year, exalting their mitred fronts "in courts and parliaments, preceding earls and "dukes," and even becoming ſovereign princes and lords of kings; becauſe we believe that true religion conſiſts in nothing more or leſs than goodneſs and virtue, though by ſome ſo monſtrouſly diſtorted,—we can recollect that (p. 10) "the be-"ginings of this confuſion were feeble enough, "though it grew to heap mountains on mountains, "and to wage war with heaven itſelf," that (p. 11)

"theſe

" theſe things were brought about by abſurd means,
" ridiculous modes, and contemptible inſtruments,
" till every thing was out of nature, in a chaos of
" levity and ferocity, and all ſorts of crimes, with
" all ſorts of follies, till it excites alternate contempt
" and indignation." In this time of the church's peace and proſperity, when there were no Diſſenters, one of our kings, in a fit of heroick piety, gave himſelf, his poſterity, his ſubjects, and all *their* lands *(but not his own)* to God, his holy mother *the church*, and to his lord the pope, to be held as a feud; the recollection of which fact enables me in ſome meaſure to underſtand ſomething of your (p. 146) " church's corporate fealty, homage, re-
" cognition of ſeignory paramount, oblation of the
" ſtate on a high altar," &c. &c. ſince (p. 172)
" that tyrant Henry VIII. no better enlightened
" than the Roman Marius, when he reſolved to
" rob the abbeys," transferred this fealty and homage from Rome to the crown of England.

If lawyers of any order, in any country, in the worſt of times, in any thing could be proved to be like the ſacred prieſthood, I would conſent to ſtand degraded, and would quit a profeſſion as injurious to the rights and liberties of mankind; but I think I ſhall be able to ſhew the direct contrary.

Lord Coke ſays, In the ſeventeenth of Edward II. in the time of the parliament, Adam de Orleton, biſhop of Hereford, was indicted of high treaſon, for being made party and privy, aiding and abetting

of Roger Mortimer, earl of March, with horſe and arms in his open rebellion: and *becauſe he could not have any privilege of clergy* by the common law, the archbiſhops of Canterbury, York, and Dublin, and and their ſuffragan biſhops, came to the bar (in that diſordered time) and with force took him from the bar: all which was done by pretext and colour of the canons of the church, which you may read in *Lindwood*.

At the parliament holden in the twenty-fifth year of Edward III. *The clergy did complain* that one Hanketon Honeby, a knight, and one of the clergy, had judgment given againſt him for high treaſon, to be hanged, drawn, and quartered: alſo for a judgment given againſt a prieſt at Nottingham, for killing of his maſter Sir Thomas Cibethorp, a clerk of the chancery, and one of the king's juſtices: and laſtly, for hanging of divers monks of Combe, for felony.

In the fiftieth year of Edward III. c. 5. the following act of parliament was paſſed, which ſtill remains in force: "Item, Becauſe that complaint "is made to our lord the king by the *clergy* of his "ſaid realm of England, that as well divers prieſts "bearing the ſweet body of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt "to ſick people, and their clerks with them, as "otherwiſe divers other perſons of *holy church*, "whiles they attend to divine ſervices in churches, "church-yards, and other places *dedicate to God*, "be ſundry times taken and arreſted by authority "royal,

" royal, and commandment of other temporal lords, " *in offence of God*, and of the *liberties of holy church*, " and alſo in diſturbance of divine ſervices afore- " ſaid: (2.) The ſame our lord the king, who " would be ſore diſpleaſed if any did in ſuch manner, " will and granteth, and defendeth upon his gra- " cious forfeiture, That none do the ſame from " henceforth, ſo that colluſion or feigned be not " found in any of the ſaid perſons of holy church " in this behalf." Hereby, lord Coke ſays, two things are to be obſerved: Firſt, he ſhall not be delivered to the ordinary before he be convicted: Secondly, that the privileges of the church extended not to high treaſon touching the king, Crimen læſæ majeſtatis, but to petit treaſons, and to felonies *touching other perſons*.

After this ſtatute, and in this king's time, as lord Coke farther ſays, Guinandus de Briland, par- ſon of Suodiland, in the county of Kent, (in which town Solomon de Rolfe, one of the king's juſtices in eyre, and *one that puniſhed the extortions and other crimes of the clergy*, dwelt) came to dine with Solomon de Rolfe, and brought poiſon with him of his malice prepenſe to murder by poiſon the ſaid Solomon; and the record of his indictment ſaith, " That he eat with him, and put poiſon in " the meat and drink of the ſaid Solomon, and " poiſoned him, whereof he died in fifteen days:" And albeit of all felonies murder is the worſt, and of all murders, murder by poiſon is the moſt una- voidable and deteſtable, and Guinand being indicted and

and arraigned upon the ſaid indictment, and being aſked, "What he had to ſay in his defence," ſaid "That he was *a clerk*, and that he could not *there* "*anſwer* thereto." And thereupon came Thomas biſhop of Rocheſter, and demanded him as a clerk, &c. And that it might be known whether he ought to be delivered "Let the truth thereof be "enquired into by the country, and the jury, &c. "upon their oath ſay, That the ſaid Guinandus "gave to the ſaid Soloman, the poiſon by which "he was poiſoned, and thereof died as is aforeſaid." But *in the end he was delivered to the ordinary*, as by the record it appeareth, and thereby *for any thing that we find* in that or any other record, *he eſcaped the ſentence of death*, which was due for his offence by the law of God, and by the common law of the realm grounded upon the ſame.

The abuſe of delivery of clerks to the ordinary grew ſo intolerable that in the end it was taken away.

In the fourth of Henry VII. the following act was made, which ſtill remains in force: "Item "Whereas upon truſt of the privilege of the "church, divers perſons lettered, have been the "more bold to commit *murder*, *rape*, *robbery*, *theft*, "and all other miſchievous deeds, becauſe they "have been continually admitted to the benefit of "the clergy, as oft as they did offend in any of the "premiſes;" in avoiding ſuch preſumptuous boldneſs "It is enacted, ordained and ſtabliſhed, by the "authority of this preſent parliament, That every "perſon

" perſon, *not being within orders*, which once hath " been admitted to the benefit of his clergy, eſt- " ſoons arraigned of any ſuch offence, be not ad- " mitted to have the benefit or privilege of his " clergy: And that every perſon ſo convicted for " murder to be marked with an M. upon the brawn " of the left thumb; and if he be for any other " felony, the ſame perſon to be marked with a T. in " the ſame place of the thumb, and thoſe marks to " be made by the gaoler openly in the court before " the judge, before that ſuch perſon be delivered to " the ordinary—provided alway, if any perſon at " the ſecond time of aſking his clergy, *becauſe he* " *is within orders*, hath not then and there ready his " his letters of his orders, or a certificate of his or- " dinary witneſſing the ſame; that then the juſtices " afore whom he is ſo arraigned, ſhall give him a " day by their diſcretion to bring in his ſaid letters " or certificate, and if he fail and bring not in at " ſuch a day, his ſaid letters nor certificate, then " the ſame perſon to loſe the benefit of his clergy, " as he ſhall do that is without orders."

A reaſonable man would have thought this very gentle touch of the *liberties of holy church*, would not have been thought *in offence of God*, nor *the clergy* " by ſecular arm *horribly oppreſſed*;" but with what temper it was borne by the clergy will be ſeen by the following caſe:

One Mr. John Hunn, a merchant of London, had proſecuted Dr. Horſey, chancellor of the biſhop

biſhop of London, in a premunire, whereupon Horſey cauſed Hunn to be arreſted for ſuſpicion of *hereſy*, and committed him to Lollard's tower, being the biſhop of London's priſon; and in a morning ſoon after the priſoner Hunn was found dead and hanged in priſon, and it was given forth, that he had hanged himſelf in his girdle; but notwithſtanding it was believed, that Horſey and the gaoler had murdered him. This coming to the gaoler's ear, he took *ſanctuary* at Weſtminſter. Upon which, and other great circumſtances, Horſey and the goaler were by a coroner's inqueſt in London, upon view of the body, found *guilty of the murder*, and Horſey, as ſhould ſeem, *being in orders*, ſtood upon this privilege, *not to be tried before temporal judges*: and this being a diſpute between *the king's prerogative* and *the privilege of the church*, the king at the requeſt of the temporal lords and many of the commons in parliament, called before him at the Black Friars, divers of his ſpiritual counſel, divines and canoniſts; where the clergy had one of their counſel argued for their privilege, and Dr. Standiſh, a learned divine, argued for the king; but the great offence taken, was againſt the abbot of Winchcomb, who in his ſermon preached at Paul's croſs *in the time of the parliament*, had affirmed, that the act made the fourth of Henry VII. (the laſt mentioned act, which reſtrains ſuch malefactors that were *not in holy orders*, and once had the benefit of the clergy, that they ſhould not have it a ſecond time) *was againſt the law of God*, and *privilege of the clergy*, and that the

the makers of the ſaid act had *incurred the cenſures of the church.* Soon after, Dr. Standiſh, who had argued for the king, was cited before the convocation, and there charged with matters of hereſy, ariſing from matters which had paſſed in his argument; whereupon he made his application to the king, who being ſatisfied of the juſtneſs of his cauſe by Dr. Veiſey, dean of his chapel, aſſembled all his judges, and counſel ſpiritual and temporal, and divers of the parliament men, and after hearing of divines, &c. the *judges* declared, *That thoſe of the convocation houſe that were at the awarding of the citation againſt Dr. Standiſh, were in a premunire.* And Fineux, *chief juſtice,* did declare *in the name of all the judges, That the convention of clerks before temporal judges had been maintained by many good and religious kings of this realm, and many good and holy fathers of the church had been obedient to it, and content with the law of the land in this point, &c.* And Dr. Veiſey gave the reaſon, *Becauſe the canon in that point was never received or allowed in England.* But the clergy not being ſatisfied, the two archbiſhops, (who affirmed that they were *bound by oath to maintain the privileges of the church*) moved the king, that *to avoid the cenſures of the church,* he would refer the matter to the *pope:* But Henry VII. like a father of Henry VIII. anſwered, "*That he by the* "*decree and ſufferance of God was king of England,* "*and the kings of England in time paſt had no ſuperior* "*but God only, and therefore know, that we will* "*maintain the right of our crown and our temporal* "*juriſdiction, as well in this point as all other.*" And after

after Horſey (*that all this while had been protected in the archbiſhop's houſe at Lambeth*) the biſhops having made his peace with the king, appeared privately in the king's bench, and pleaded *not guilty* to the Inquiſition; and Erneley, the king's attorney, *confeſſed the plea*, whereby *Horſey was diſcharged*, and the biſhops *promiſed to dimiſs* Standiſh.

In the twenty-third of Henry VIII. it was enacted after a long preamble, That no perſon who ſhould be found guilty of petit treaſon, wilful murder of malice prepenſe, robbing churches, chapels, &c. dwelling-houſes, or on the highways, burning houſes, or barns wherein any grain of corns ſhould happen to be, or of procuring, abetting, &c. the ſame ſhould from thenceforth be admitted to the benefit of his clergy, but utterly be excluded thereof, and ſuffer death in ſuch manner and form as they ſhould have done for any the cauſes or offences aboveſaid, if they were no clerks, *ſuch as were within holy orders*, that is to ſay, of the orders of ſub-deacon, or above *only except*.

I ſhould have thought any order of men would have felt themſelves irremediably diſgraced by ſuch *exceptions*, and would have ſacrificed every privilege rather than have ſuffered ſuch records to have ſtigmatized everlaſtingly their conduct.

In the thirtieth year of the ſame king Henry VIII. an act was paſſed for aboliſhing of diverſity of opinions in certain articles concerning religion; which

which ſtates that, "The king moſt prudently "pondering, that by occaſion of *ſundry opinions* "of the ſaid articles, great diſcord had ariſen, as "well among the clergy as the *vulgar people*, "commanded the ſaid articles *to be debated* by the "archbiſhops, biſhops, and other clergy; and gra- "ciouſly vouchſafed in his own princely perſon to "*deſcend into his ſaid high court* of parliament, and "there *like a prince of moſt high prudence and no leſs* "*learning*, opened and declared many things of *high* "*learning*, and great knowledge, touching the ſaid "articles: Whereupon, after *long diſputation*, it was "by the king, lords ſpiritual and temporal, and "other learned men of his clergy in their convoca- "tion, and the commons, finally reſolved,

"Firſt—That in the moſt bleſſed ſacrament of "the altar by the ſtrength and efficacy of Chriſt's "mighty word (it being ſpoken by the prieſt) is "preſent really, under the form of bread and wine, "the natural body and blood of our Saviour Jeſu "Chriſt, conceived of the virgin Mary: And that "after the conſecration there remaineth no ſub- "ſtance of bread or wine, nor any other ſubſtance, "but the ſubſtance of Chriſt, God and man."

And in like manner five other articles are determined.

"For which moſt godly ſtudy and pain of his "his majeſty, his *humble and obedient* ſubjects, the "lords ſpiritual and temporal, and commons, for "the

" the unity of the whole realm, beſought his royal " majeſty, that it might be enacted, and it accord- " ingly was enacted, That if any perſon in this " realm, after the twelfth of July then next, by " word, writing, imprinting, cyphering, *or in any* " *otherwiſe* do publiſh, preach, teach, ſay, affirm, " declare, diſpute, argue, or *hold opinion*, that in the " bleſſed ſacrament of the altar, under the form of " bread and wine (after the conſecration thereof) " there is not preſent really, the natural body and " blood of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, conceived of " the virgin Mary, &c. or by any means contemn, " deprave, or *deſpiſe*, the ſaid bleſſed ſacrament, that " then every ſuch perſon ſo offending, their aiders, " *comforters*, counſellors, *conſenters*, and abettors " therein, being thereof convicted before three or " more commiſſioners (of which the archbiſhop, or " biſhop of the dioceſe, or his chancellor, to be " one) ſhall be deemed and adjudged *heretikes*, and " every ſuch offence ſhall be adjudged manifeſt " hereſy, and that every ſuch offender ſhall there- " fore have and ſuffer judgment, *execution, and pain* " *of death, by way of burning*, without any abju- " ration, clergy, or ſanctuary, and ſhall forfeit all " his goods and eſtates, *as in caſes of high treaſon.*"

The like clauſes are added for the other articles, and power is given to the commiſſioners to ſummon jurors before them to enquire in counties of hereſies.

It ſeems ſtrange to me, " a plain man," that this *condeſcending* king, of *moſt high* prudence and *learning*,

learning, with his ſaid *humble and obedient* ſubjects, ſhould, in the very act for *neceſſary unity in opinion*, admit the ſix articles to be *debated as queſtions*, and that after *long diſputations* they had *enacted the truth*, and then puniſh with *death* any *heretike*, their aiders, *conſenters*, and abettors, that ſhould *hold opinion* to the contrary. Though to be ſure this act was ſoon after repealed, and the acts of parliament THOSE MAKERS OF TRUTH, now in force, have a direct contrary creed, viz. "I do ſolemnly and ſin-"cerely in the preſence of God, profeſs, teſtify, and "declare, that I do believe, that in the ſacrament "of the Lord's ſupper there is not any tranſub-"ſtantiation of the elements of bread and wine into "the body and blood of Chriſt, at or before the "conſecration thereof by any perſon whatſoever." Such ſport have kings and ſtateſmen, at the inſtigation of their prieſts, "whom you look up to "with reverence," made with the *conſciences* and *lives*; thoſe "rights of men;" but which with you, Sir, ſeem "paltry blurred ſhreds:" and ſuch degraded beings, are "*humble and obedient ſubjects*," even lords and commons, when in the leading ſtrings of prieſts. I might ſhew the utter contempt of theſe rights with both churchmen, and ſome ſtateſmen, by quoting the preamble to the act of the Firſt of Philip and Mary, chap. 8, where the "*very ſorry and* "*repentant children*," the lords ſpiritual and temporal, and commons, repreſenting the whole body of the realm of England, moſt humbly ſue for abſolution, and to be received into the boſom and unity of Chriſt's church; and in a very few years

after, the act of the firſt of Elizabeth, chap. 1. where the ſame "*humble, faithful, and obedient ſubjects*," "lament the bondage they were eſtſoons brought "under" by the laſt mentioned act.

In the firſt year of queen Elizabeth, the act, called the Uniformity Act, now in force, paſſed for reſtoring the Book of Common Prayer, and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, which had been taken away by act of another parliament in the firſt year of queen Mary, "to the great decay of the "due honour of God, and diſcomfit to the truth "of Chriſt's religion." Whereby it is enacted (ſect. 3.) "That all miniſters in any pariſh church, "or other place in the queen's dominions, ſhall be "bounden to *ſay and uſe* the *mattins, even-ſong*, celebration of the Lord's ſupper, and adminiſtration "of each of the ſacraments, and all the common "and open prayer, in ſuch order and form as in the "ſaid book, and none other or otherwiſe." And, (ſect. 4.) "if any miniſter who ought to *ſing* and "ſay common prayer, refuſe to uſe the ſame or uſe "any other rite, order, or other *open prayer*, openly "or *privately*, or ſhall ſpeak any thing in derogation of the ſaid book, or any thing therein, he "ſhall (ſect. 6.) for the third offence loſe his preferment, if he has any, and be impriſoned for "life; and (ſect. 8.) if he has no preferment, be "impriſoned for life for his ſecond offence." And by (ſect. 14.) "All perſons (having no lawful excuſe) ſhall reſort to their pariſh church accuſtomed, or upon reaſonable let thereof, to ſome "uſual

" uſual place where common prayer is uſed, upon " every Sunday, and *other days ordained as holy-days*, " upon pain of puniſhment *by the cenſures of the* " *church*, and upon forfeiture of one ſhilling for " every offence to the poor; and (ſect. 18.) " biſhops, &c. are at their pleaſure to join and aſ- " ſociate themſelves with juſtices of aſſize, and oyer " and terminer, to enquire of, hear, and determine " offences againſt this act." In (ſect. 15.) there is a moſt pious prayer and requeſt of the queen, temporal lords, and commons, to the biſhops, &c. to ſee to the due execution of the act, " as they " would anſwer before God for the evils and " plagues wherewith Almighty God might juſtly " puniſh his people for neglecting this *good and* " *wholeſome law*."

" This " *good and wholeſome law*," and the church's " *neceſſary exerciſe of wholeſome ſeverities*," had a moſt ſevere effect on many very peaceable and uſeful ſubjects, as may be known by any who will give themſelves the trouble to read the impartial hiſtories of thoſe times, in which they will be under no great neceſſity of " raking with any pro- " fligate induſtry for inſtances of abuſe" in church authority.

A plain man might have thought that not to ſay and uſe the *mattins* and even-*ſong* was no ſuch important matter to the ſtate, whatever it might have been to the court, as ſinging is there of higher conſequence. I remember reading ſomewhere, I

think in captain Brydone's travels, of a ſignora Gabrielli, or ſome ſuch name, (as I do not frequent operas I cannot be very correct) who while in Ruſſia as a ſinger, was occaſionally capricious; the empreſs once wanted her to ſing, whether *mattins* or *even-ſong*, or a ſong of her own, I cannot tell, but the lady was not in the humour to ſing, either the one or the other: the empreſs (not much uſed to denials I preſume) ſent an officer to inform her, that if ſhe did not ſing, ſhe would ſend her to priſon; the indignant lady, in the true ſpirit of a preſbyterian, replied, "Tell your miſtreſs ſhe may "ſend me to *priſon*, but ſhe *cannot make me ſing*." Now it ſeems to have happened in England, at the time this act paſſed, that the puritans, (or lollards, or preſbyterians, or non-conformiſts, or diſſenters, or ſome ſuch name) were as obſtinate, or capricious, as ſignora Gabrielli: they would not ſing our queen's *mattins*, or even-*ſong*; of courſe ſhe ſent them to priſon, and thouſands of them were plundered with an unfeeling ferocity, ſeldom ſeen but among intolerant prieſts, who do all "*for the love* "*of God*," and, pro ſalute animi, was a label to every faggot in Smithfield.

Among the many thouſands who ſuffered by this *good and wholeſome law* under the eye of the biſhops, thoſe "*dead dogs and fleas*," as they then called themſelves; and who were to ſee the due execution of this act; was poor John Bunyan, author of the Pilgrim's Progreſs, an ingenious allegory that has run through more than fifty editions.

editions. He was impriſoned in Bedford gaol above twelve years. The bill of indictment preferred againſt him was "for deviliſhly and perniciouſly "abſtaining from coming to church to hear divine "ſervice, and for being a common upholder of "ſeveral unlawful meetings and conventicles, to "the diſturbance and diſtraction of the good ſub-"jects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our "ſovereign lord the king, &c." One of our late Diſſenting miniſters took this indictment as an example, to give us, his hearers, *diſtinguiſhing ears*; and learn us to ſeparate *facts* from *colouring*: he ſays, "the two facts were theſe, John Bunyan *did* "*not* worſhip Almighty God in the *pariſh* meeting-"houſe; *he did* worſhip Almighty God in a farm "houſe. Now theſe two facts are innocent in "themſelves, inoffenſive to ſociety, and altogether "unconnected with plots of ſubverting civil go-"vernment; conſequently, the citizen who did "them, ought not to have been criminated for "theſe actions: but call the pariſh meeting-houſe "*the church*;—name the ceremonies performed "there, *ſervice*;—aſſert the book that contains "them to be *divine*;—make the whole of religion "to conſiſt in *hearing* a prieſt *read it*;—affirm a "*devil*, or a *devilkin*, comes from hell to perſuade "Bunyan not to *hear* it;—ſay that Bunyan's ab-"ſence is of ſo much conſequence as to be *per-*"*nicious*, or deſtructive to the divine book;—call "the farmer's parlour, held in fee ſimple, a *con-*"*venticle* or meeting-place;—ſay, if a few harveſt "men and their wives meet there, and get drunk

"at harveſt home, the parlour is a *lawful* con-
" venticle; and if they meet there the next day, to
" repent of drunkenneſs, and get Bunyan to pray
" with them, that God would accept it, and to tell
" them out of the bible, whether they might hope
" for it, that then it is an unlawful conventicle;—
" ſay, that the prayers and diſcourſe of theſe poor
" men, *diſturb* and *diſtract* all the good ſubjects of
" the kingdom, who may yet happen to be at the
" very time, extremely merry at operas, playhouſes,
" taverns, alehouſes, and other places, and know
" nothing about it;—bedizen all this with the name
" of *our ſovereign lord the king*, and, lo! this rhetoric
" ſends John Bunyan to gaol for twelve years and
" ſix months."

But ſevere as this law of queen Elizabeth was, it allowed to the pious and kind prieſts, only "the "cenſures of the church;" and as printing had "diffuſed ſome rays of light among the people, and, as lord Halifax ſaid, "had produced ſome "contempt of the clergy," they found the people leſs obſequious than formerly, which induced them to abandon "church cenſures" for the more ſubſtantial puniſhment of fine and impriſonment; for which purpoſe the high commiſſion court was ſoon in vogue, (for theſe men could never conſent to uſe the law but among their own order) and innumerable, almoſt, are the caſes of oppreſſion that were brought before the judges, and courts of law, under this commiſſion: I ſhall quote only one, from lord Coke, as an inſtance:

In

In the reign of queen Elizabeth, William Taylor, clerk, parſon of Springfield, in Eſſex, did implead William Maſſy, gentleman, before the high commiſſioners, for "giving irreverent ſpeeches to "the miniſter, &c. for carrying his corn on holy-"days, for not ſuffering the parſon and pariſhioners "to come through his yard in rogation-week in the "perambulation, and not giving them a repaſt as "he uſually had done; that he whiſtled, and "knocked on the parſon's barn door, and ſaid he "did it to make him muſic for his daughter's "marriage;" and many other articles of the like nature: And it was ruled upon motion and often debating, by the whole court of common pleas, that the high commiſſioners could not deal with ſuch inferior offences, but are to be left to the proper dioceſan, who is to reform the ſame, with leſs charge and travel in the proper dioceſe. And thereupon a *prohibition* was granted by the court of common pleas.

The reſtraining the clergy by prohibitions from worrying the common people in their high commiſſion courts, (the laſt reſort of the church to rid themſelves of the common law of the land, that charter of liberty which the judges ſolemnly declared to be the birth-right of Engliſhmen) ſeemed to them ſo intolerable, that every art was uſed to prevent it. No ſooner was James the firſt, diſcovered to have abandoned preſbyterianiſm, and become a warm epiſcopalian, than his clergy beſought him to uſe his eccleſiaſtical prerogative royal,

of

of which themſelves were of courſe to be the adminiſtrators; in which it is poſſible, from the diſpoſition of the king, they might have ſucceeded, but they were nobly reſiſted by our "unconſecrated" judges; or to uſe the language of holy church, "the "clergy were horribly oppreſſed by ſecular arm." Dr. Richard Bancroft, archbiſhop of Canterbury, in the name of the whole clergy, exhibited in Michaelmas term, third year of James I. twenty-five articles to the lords of the privy-counſel, againſt the judges of the realm, to which all the judges of England, with one unanimous conſent, after mature deliberation and conſideration, delivered full anſwers in Eaſter term following; which, in my eſtimation, are a complete, and deciſive evidence, of the direct contrary ſpirit of the two orders. In which articles the clergy bitterly complain, that the "*innovating* "*conceit and humour of the times* was grown too "eager againſt eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, and *ſo rank*, "that when contentious perſons were ſued for tithes, "&c. in eccleſiaſtical courts, they, from hatred "towards their miniſters, and to vex them with "ſuits at common law, knowing their own ſtrength "with jurors in the country, flee into Weſtminſter "Hall, *where they find more favour*, to maintain "their wrangling, *than they can hope for in eccleſiaſ-* "*tical courts*; when *out flieth* from thence very "readily a prohibition, againſt which the archbiſhop "for the clergy, prayed a remedy, leſt *truth* might "be overborn, and *poor miniſters* ſtill left unto coun-"try trials, there to juſtify the right of the tithes, "before *unconſcionable jurors.*" And as impriſon-

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ment upon the writ de excommunicato capiendo, was "the chiefeſt temporal ſtrength," (*I thought the teſt laws were the bulwarks*) "of the eccleſiaſtical "juriſdiction;" they demand to be reſolved, "why "the judges delivered the impriſoned parties on "habeas corpus," &c? To which the judges, like true patriots, anſwered; that "in former ages, mi-"niſters were well content to accept ſuch tithes as "had uſed to be paid, and not to contend againſt "any preſcription, or compoſition;" but that in this time, many "turbulent miniſters," (*in our days only Diſſenters are turbulent*) "were grown ſo trouble-"ſome to their neighbours," and did infinitely vex their pariſhioners, for ſuch kind of tithes as they never had; that were it not for prohibitions, they would ſoon overthrow all preſcriptions and compoſitions; and as to the trial by jury, they held it to be a far better courſe, than by the conſcience of any particular man, guided by paper-proofs; and as to the habeas corpus, they ſay, if any man is impriſoned, *without juſt cauſe*, they did and ought to deliver him, being bound by oath ſo to do; and though the judges ſay, ſome of them had dealt with the clergy, to certify *the particular cauſe*, whereby it might appear to them to be a matter of eccleſiaſtical cognizance, yet they would *by no means* do it; and the judges add, that this courſe of the eccleſiaſtical "judges caſts a ſcandal upon the juſtice of the "realm." The whole of the articles and anſwers are in lord Coke's Inſtitutes; are well worth reading; and are the higeſt evidence, next to acts of parliament, that I can offer to my readers in proof

of

of my poſition.—I would have copied them but they are too long. In fact, Sir, the two prieſthoods, as you call them, appear to me to tread antipodes; the one ſhewing no ſpirit of corporation, no preference whatever to their own order, but extending the broad ſhield of the law, equally alike, over every claſs of ſubjects, againſt a ſet of church harpies; who, on the contrary, avow a ſpirit of corporation, that deſtroys every principle of juſtice, declaring every imaginary offence againſt any, to be an affront to the *whole order*, and uſing every art to draw all men into the ſpiritual courts, ad aliud examen, where themſelves are ſole judges, and ſometimes both accuſers and judges: that but for the manly ſpirit of reſiſtance in the profeſſors of the law, this country would have been ſwallowed up in the vortex of holy church. One of their own order, a modern biſhop, is ſaid to have left it in writing, that he always believed well of *laymen*, till he ſaw cauſe to change his mind; though as to *churchmen*, it was otherwiſe with him; for he had ſeen ſo much amiſs in that profeſſion, that he was inclined always to think ill of them, till he ſaw cauſe to think otherwiſe; and Grotius ſays, that eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is nothing elſe but a detail of the villainies of prieſts: Yet this, Sir, is the ſacred order whom you reverence ſo much, "the better "nature (p. 136) that ought ever to preſide as ap-"proximated as nearly as poſſible to perfection, "ſolemnly and for ever conſecrated to ſtand in the "preſence of God." Theſe articles of the archbiſhop proclaim the clergy's own eternal ſpirit of litigation,

litigation, where they admit that four hundred and eighty-eight prohibitions in queen Elizabeth's time, and eighty-two in the firſt three years of king James's reign had been ſent into the court of the arches *only*; and the judges in their anſwer ſay, there were *but* two hundred and fifty-one ſent from the king's bench in thoſe three years, to all the eccleſiaſtical courts in England; and ſixty-two out of the common pleas; all for certain claims of tythes, in which prohibitions ought to go, being de modo decimandi, upon unity of poſſeſſion, for trees of twenty years growth and upwards, or for barren and heath ground, &c.

We have had parliamentary enquiries for law-expences about pariſh-ſettlements, and when collected together, they ſeemed an enormous ſum; but what would the expences attending litigious law-ſuits againſt laymen for their tythes amount to, if parliament had the virtue to promote a like enquiry? The former would appear to this, like the land-tax of Scotland to England: but, alas! the church we find is a ſeigniory paramount; her property more ſacred than that gained by the toil and ſweat of the labouring hind, or plodding farmer; and as our forefathers were not ſo unlucky as to be "enlightened with philoſophy," or ſo wicked as to claim "the rights of men," and a long antiquity of ſeven hundred years, gives prieſts an abſolute power and right of tormenting the lay-people; we have only to "bear with patience and long ſuffering "faith," "till the precurſor of the milennium" (the general

general knowledge and love of virtue) ſhall give to to all men the equal rights of juſtice;—when the general voice may induce thoſe who have the power, "to begin the fabric of a new eſtabliſhment of the "church," on the plan you, Sir, recommend: (p. 45) "on principles of reference to antiquity" of another thouſand years back, before tythes commenced, and before prieſts were conſecrated a ſacred order; which of courſe will lay (p. 54) "the "foundation of freedom in ſeverer manners, and a "ſyſtem of more auſtere and maſculine morality."

The act of uniformity to compel the going to church, no doubt was intended to inforce moral inſtruction; but the clergy who were to ſee its due execution, made uſe of it as an engine of oppreſſion, not only againſt ſectaries, but even againſt their own flocks. Inſtead of going into alehouſes, and loitering places, to find *abſentees* from public worſhip, and "to compel them to come in;" they ſent ſpies to meeting-houſes, dubbed "conventicles," to force Diſſenters to become churchmen, with the ſame ſpirit that they ſent their pretended Indian miſſionaries among Americans, to convert them from preſbyterianiſm to epiſcopacy, while the ſilly folks at home, believed they gave their money to convert heathens. Some of the clergy have even libelled their own churchmen pariſhioners, in their ſpiritual courts, to compel them to attend in their own pariſh churches, if they have gone to other churches, nearer than their own; which muſt be merely love of dominion: the caſe of Dr. Standiſh againſt Britten

Britten was this: and it ſeems, but for the prohibitions of the law courts, all ranks and degrees of the laity muſt have been ſubject to this tyranny, and of courſe, in time, muſt have applied to their pariſh prieſts for leave of abſence from church, as paupers do to juſtices when they go to hay harveſt; though no doubt a licenſe, or diſpenſation, might have been obtained for money, as it was in former times, from certain ſpiritual courts, for every crime, even to killing a man's own father. I wiſh not to be underſtood as pleading for a neglect of public worſhip; it was meant, and where opportunity offers, ought to be improved for public inſtruction, though many pariſh churches have now only the parſon and clerk. But I can ſee the craft of the prieſt in all their inſtitutions; and the policy of the church of Rome, the mother of moſt eſtabliſhments, ſeems the perfection of human wiſdom, or rather of human cunning. Even our reformed church, is a corporation of prieſts, creating one another ad infinitum, without the conſent of the people, or the interference of the ſtate; and none can inherit, or take, any part of the 2,000,000l. a year, but ſome one of this corporation, to which none can have or be admitted, but by their own creation.

The word *church*, has been in all ages and nations, ſince the eſtabliſhment of the prieſthood, a convenient hocus pocus for artful men. In our country, *the viſible church of Chriſt* (Article xix) is a "congregation of faithful men," into which one of your clergy ſays, all in this country are born whether

whether they will or no. When any thing is to be *done* by the church, "the congregation of faithful "men" are called on to perform the duty of good churchmen;—when any thing is to be *got*, the clergy are the church, and they take what is bequeathed to it;—when it is convenient to cry out *the church is in danger!* the wiſe mob fix their eyes on the pariſh-ſteeple, for they know of no other church, though ſome ſome may be ſilly enough to ſuppoſe, they are in fear for "the congregation of "faithful men;"—when the church formed an *alliance* with the ſtate, which of the three deſcriptions was the ally? Not the ſteeple, I trow; nor "the congregation of faithful men;" they were all ſubjects, and in this reſpect were not ſui juris. On our late application to parliament, when *the church was in danger*, was it the *ſteeple*, the *clergy*, or "the "congregation of faithful men?" "*O that men* "*were wiſe, that they underſtood this!*—Alas! Sir, I break forth in hymns, like "the apoſtle of the "Old Jewry," (p. 107)—*We* know, Sir, the church is in danger, when the wheat ſheaf and tythe fleece (the apple of the church's eye) is looked at "*aſkance*," though barricadoed with canons, acts, and church cenſures, including pains of hell, ſacrilege, and ſimony. Simon Magus offered money to the apoſtles for power to confer the Holy Ghoſt; a clergyman's (for none elſe is eligible) offering money for power to take tythes, is called in our old books, the "heinous ſin of "ſimony" from Simon Magus. *Query.* Where is the analogy between the Holy Ghoſt and a tythe ſheaf?

ſheaf? I thought the mitre was ſuppoſed to be the form of the cloven tongues. Having aſked one queſtion, I will put another—If the church that formed the alliance with the ſtate, was not the congregation of faithful men, (which the church articles ſay, *is the church of Chriſt*) but the clergy; were they ſui juris as to this buſineſs? Were they like the old church in Edward the third's time, not to be touched by the ſecular arm? that is, Were they not ſubjects? Or do they, by taking orders, (the form of admiſſion into the corporation of *ſpirituals*, for a title to *temporals*) become exempt from the civil power of their country, and become no longer ſubjects, but like independent ſovereign princes, at liberty to contract with the ſtate, and form an alliance?

It would be a curioſity, if any gentleman of ſenſe and leiſure, would trace the uſurpations of the prieſthood over the laity, which have been reſtrained by the common law; and yet the common law itſelf ſeems to me to favour the clergy unreaſonably, by throwing the onus probandi on the defendant, whenever the prieſt chuſes to ſet up a new claim of tythes in his pariſh.

The predilection (as I ſhould call it) in the law for the clergy, probably had its beginning when biſhops were our national judges; but ariſe when it might, it furniſhes many a triumph for the clergy in the exchequer.—The vaſt advantage of this *common right principle* will be ſeen by men, not of the

the law, if they conſider, that no man can recover judgment at law, for a debt, till he has proved in legal form, it was once due, the onus probandi lying, as it ought, on the plaintiff; after which, a defendant is put on proving his diſcharge, by payment, or by a ſatisfaction in ſome other way: But in the caſe of the clergy's tythes, the law preſumes, in moſt caſes, the tythes to be due of common right, without putting him to the proof, and throws the onus probandi on the defendant, to prove in fact a ſort of negative; which is found in many caſes extremely difficult, from the loſs of old grants, pope's bulls, charters, &c. and not unfrequently, loſes a defendant a cauſe, which I think he ſhould gain by long quiet poſſeſſion; but we may almoſt ſay, nullum tempus occurrit *eccleſiæ*—"The "congregation of faithful men," have a greater intereſt in this matter than we Diſſenters, as they are the majority; and it is their "will and pleaſure," theſe things ſhould be.

Innumerable almoſt are the trials for tythes of every different kind and invention; offerings, mortuaries, pulpits, veſtries, church-ſeats, ornaments; appointing, diſplacing, and paying, church-wardens, church-clerks, and other officers; fees to their numerous officers, proctors, apparitors; and for chriſtenings, marriages, churchings, burials, &c. &c. &c. which would fill volumes. But I have ſhewn enough to juſtify my propoſition, that the law gives liberty, while the prieſthood deſtroys it; I ſhould find it no difficult matter to prove, that it

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is the ſtate that tolerates, not the church,—ſhe is not as you ſay, "much altered."

Having ſaid thus much reſpecting law, and lawyers, or country attorneys, I would as a Diſſenter, ſhew that ſectaries have been, and are, greater friends to the general liberty of all mankind, than any eſtabliſhed church; and if I ſhould be able to ſatisfy my fellow-citizens, that their prieſts, craftily miſrepreſent us ſectaries, as ſeeking only for *power*, when we apply to get rid of a *proſcription*, I ſhould not deſpair of ſeeing religious liberty, in a ſhort time, as freely extended among all men alike, with the general conſent of the *laity*, as I am ſure it will never be with the conſent of the clergy; as that body oppoſed every reformation, even that from popery.

But perhaps ſome one may aſk with you, Sir, why this raking into ancient hiſtory, with malignant induſtry, to expoſe the failings of the clergy, who pretend to be no more than men, and men of like paſſions with ourſelves, particularly as (p. 214) "there is viſibly a great abatement, "rather than a viſible increaſe in their vices; that "inſtead of loading the preſent clergy, with the "crimes of other men, and the odious characters "of other times, in common equity they ought to "be praiſed, encouraged, and ſupported in their "departure from a ſpirit which diſgraced their "predeceſſors?" This argument of your's would apply, if uſed by the Diſſenters of this day, in

anſwer to that torrent of abuſe that has been poured on them from your numerous pulpits; but the church is not materially "altered in four hun-"dred years;" and the eſtabliſhment remains the ſame now, as in the times of thoſe odious characters; and yet (p. 135) "is thought of firſt, and "laſt, and midſt," by you ſtateſmen, who are determined to keep it (p. 136) "in the ſtate it "exiſts," cheriſhing "your old prejudices, becauſe "they are prejudices," conſidering the church (p. 129) as "purged from all impurities, of fraud, "violence, injuſtice, and tyranny."—It becomes therefore, neceſſary for Diſſenters to appeal to the *common ſenſe* of *common* men, in order to ſhew a little more obviouſly, than ſome gentlemen may wiſh, that there was neither juſtice nor wiſdom in any part of the conduct of our oppoſers, on our late attempt to remove an odious and grating ſtigma, and unmerited reproach; as if a Diſſenter from ſuch a church, muſt neceſſarily be a villain, and unfit to be truſted with arms among his fellow-citizens. No ſmall ſhare in their diſappointments may be attributed to you, Sir; for which meritorious ſervice to the church, and eſpecially for your pamphlet, I expect you will not only be created doctor of laws in the univerſity of Dublin, but probably in Oxford, and perhaps after death be canonized; and it is even poſſible, St. Edmund's reliques may work as many miracles as St. Thomas a Becket's, as I am certain you are a better citizen, if not as great a ſaint. You are welcome, Sir, to this certificate of mine, if it will be of any uſe when the

the devil's advocate ſhall oppoſe your canonization; ſince I find by Dr. Moore, the ſpiritual court is too juſt, not to allow even to his infernal highneſs, a proxy on ſuch occaſions. I do not know whether you had an eye to this glorious reward, when you, who poſſeſs ſo lively a ſenſibility for "kings and "queens," and "a ſenſe of generoſity," ſhewed yourſelf capable of a perſonal triumph over the "fallen and oppreſſed" Diſſenters in the houſe of commons. Indeed, you have ſatisfied many that you poſſeſs a ſpirit and feelings fitted for a biſhop; that ſhould you hereafter, as has been predicted, be entirely diſguſted with politics, you may, after all, betake yourſelf to the church: and I think it extremely probable, you may attain the ſacred bench. But the occaſion was moſt important, from the great danger to the church, when the Diſſenters dared to apply to their own repreſentatives for relief; "'Tis the misfortune of theſe times, that "every thing is to be diſcuſſed." You might well be forced to apologize for the common feelings of a man, and to enquire, why you felt ſo differently from the Rev. Dr. Price, and his lay flock? As things then ſtood (p. 119) "with every thing *re-* "*ſpectable* deſtroyed without us, and an attempt to "deſtroy within us every principle of reſpect," you could do no leſs than threaten Diſſenters with awaking "ſleeping Lazarus," that thorn in the ſide of the old whigs, and a whig government; but popularity was to be gained, and a convocation now would be more congenial to the times.

We Diſſenters, Sir, are not ſuffered to be ignorant of the power of the crown; it may call a convocation of the clergy, and ſhould it do ſo, we believe it will find no difficulty in ſetting a pack full cry on the ſectaries; but we ſomewhat expect, the miniſter, however unfriendly to us, will not venture to do ſo; for, well as the clergy *love the court*, they are known to love their *own order better*; and they might chuſe to make a canon, to accompliſh archbiſhop Laud's pious intent: "*That never a country* "*eſquire of them all, ſhould ſtand with his hat on before* "*a pariſh prieſt.*" Or, perhaps, they might even revive the old cant; "that the prieſthood is a "princely power, greater and more venerable than "the emperor:" "That the ſpiritual government "is farther above the civil power, than heaven "is above the earth:" "That a biſhop is to be "honoured as God:" "That the *revenue* of prieſts "ought to be greater than *kings*:" "That kings "and queens are to bow down before the prieſts, "with their faces towards the earth; and to lick up "the duſt of their feet:" "That the chief magiſ-"trate is bound to ſubmit to the biſhops, who may "excommunicate him:" "And that it is a con-"tradiction, and an impoſſibility, for any ſtate to "have authority over the church, that is, over "prieſts:" With innumerable other extravagant poſitions that this order have inſiſted on, and eſtabliſhed (p. 118) "among a groſs, ſtupid, ferocious "poor, ſordid, barbarous, ſwiniſh multitude," not four hundred years ſince. From which conſideration, our fears on this head "are not tremblingly "alive;"

" alive;" and as you, Sir, ſeem to have made very high claims for them, the verieſt tories of the order, and even Dr. Hicks, if living, might remain ſatisfied, while Lazarus ſleepeth.—But we Diſſenters, Sir, have not forgot your conſiſtency: when a former houſe of commons declared, the " influence of the crown had increaſed, was in- " creaſing, and ought to be diminiſhed," you did yourſelf the honour to act with a goodly band of whigs: but when a handful of old faſhioned whigs, who have experienced the uſual gratitude of courts, applied in a conſtitutional way to their own repreſentatives, (at leaſt as much their's as the clergy's,) you chop about (p. 356) " wiſhing to pre- " ſerve conſiſtency, and that that you may preſerve " it, vary your means to ſecure the utility of the " end, and when the equipoiſe of the veſſel in which " you ſail may be endangered by overloading on " one ſide, you deſire to carry your ſmall weight to " the other," becauſe " the whole clan of the en- " lightened" among us, (p. 130) " have even no " attachment to their country*, only as far as it " falls in with their fleeting projects;" being in fact merely like what you deſcribe the Iriſhman to have been in the ſtorm, " Careleſs about the ſafety of " the veſſel in which he was ſailing, becauſe he " was only a paſſenger in it." Yet, Sir, to reaſon-

* In the year 1772, ſome gentleman maintained a contrary doctrine in the houſe of commons, It was then ſaid, " That the Engliſh hiſ- " tory abounded with examples, which ſhew them (the Diſſenters) to " have been excellent citizens; and to have been as loyal, and dutiful, " under good kings, as they were firm in their oppoſition to thoſe " tyrants who wanted to overturn the conſtitution." Annual Regiſter, vol. 15. chap. viii. page 96.

able men, this conduct of the Diſſenters muſt appear aſtoniſhing, as it is well known they have a large ſtake in the veſſel, and ſome of them much greater even than yourſelf; but then (p. 130) "they "are at inexpiable war with eſtabliſhments," and "are ſyſtematically oppoſers of all things that give "perpetuity as miſchievous;" and have (p. 131) "ſufficient motive to deſtroy old things *becauſe they* "*are old*, having no fears of the duration of new "plans, *placing* all their hopes in new diſcoveries;" which diſpoſition of the Diſſenters made you, like a true patriot, ſhift ſides, to preſerve the equipoiſe of the old veſſel of the ſtate, in which we are all ſailing, then in the moſt imminent danger of being overſet, by the preponderating weight of (p. 87) "a handful of people" *all* on one ſide; when on the other there were *only* the *courtiers*, the *church*, ſome *corporations*, ALL the *placemen*, and *penſioners*, and *two hundred and ninety-four commoners*, beſides yourſelf; for as I underſtand, you did not ſtay to divide; ſo that by ſhifting ſides it may be believed you actually preſerved the old veſſel from being overſet by us Diſſenters, and you of courſe have deſervedly obtained from a grateful community, popularity and ſome honours; not that theſe were at all in your view at the time; for (p. 356) "you deſire "honours, diſtinctions, and emoluments, but little, "and expect none at all." It muſt have been a high ſenſe of neceſſity that induced you to change ſides at this critical time, for (p. 206) "it is not with "much credulity you liſten to any, when they "ſpeak evil of thoſe whom they are going to "plunder;

" plunder; and you rather ſuſpect, that vices are " feigned, or exaggerated, *when profit is looked for* " *in their puniſhment*, as an *enemy* is a bad *witneſs*, " and a robber a worſe." Yet, notwithſtanding this neceſſary caution, you ſomehow or other, Sir, got hold of two or three idle tales, (no doubt from thoſe *diſintereſted witneſſes* the clergy) of one Diſſenter who did not care the *nip of a ſtraw* for the Teſt Act; of another who had written a catechiſm for children to ſuck in with their mother's milk; and of a third (p. 85) " man among them of great authority, and " certainly of great talents;" who had written about a train of gunpowder, that would blow up the eſtabliſhment; who declared, " he ſhould be better " pleaſed if the motion was loſt;" (the aſſigned reaſon being ſuppreſſed;) which afforded you an excellent opportunity, with a brilliant imagination, to ſuggeſt others, and diſplay vaſt oratory in (p. 155) " the diſhoneſt, perfidious, and cruel con- " fiſcations in France;" of which you " beheld " ſimilar beginnings at home, in a cabal" of (p. 127) " little, ſhrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud " and troubleſome inſects of an hour, with manifeſt " deſign to connect the affairs of France with " England, by drawing us into an imitation, which " gave you a conſiderable degree of uneaſineſs; " although (p. 132) you could venture to pro- " pheſy," (with " a revelation of your own" (p. 107) I ſuppoſe) " that ſhould a handful of people," (p. 131) " by intrigues, ſermons, publications, and " confidence from an union with France, draw con- " ſiderable numbers into their faction, and in con- " ſequence,

" ſequence, ſeriouſly attempt any thing in imitation, " they would accompliſh their own deſtruction;" as " (p. 147) this nation is above all things at- " tached to the eſtabliſhed religion, and beyond " all other nations have acted *unwiſely*, and *unjuſt-* " *iſiably* in its favour;" that this people, which refuſed to change the " law in remote ages from " reſpect to the infallibility of the pope, will not " alter now from a pious implicit faith in the dog- " matiſm of philoſophy;" and (p. 127) " we are " not materially changed in the laſt four hundred " years;" (though then we were all roman catholics, and now proteſtants;) and that " not from indif- " ference, but from zeal;' " being ſo tenacious " of our old eccleſiaſtical modes (p. 134) that we " have made no alteration ſince the fourteenth or " fifteenth century;" yet, " you would not exclude " all alteration neither (p. 355) and if any reviſion " ſhould be thought of, no atheiſt," (and certainly no Diſſenter) would be called in; there would be no violent condemning (p. 135) " of Greeks, Ar- " minians, or Roman catholics, now the heat is " over." " Our education is ſo formed as to con- " firm and fix this impreſſion; our education is in a " manner in the hands of the eccleſiaſtics; and in all " ſteps from infancy to manhood." Yet with all theſe invincible ties in the church's favour, that changes can ſcarcely be hoped for; yet (p. 10) " there are " circumſtances when prudence *may* juſtify our " ſpeaking out; and whenever our neighbour's " houſe is on fire, it cannot be amiſs *for the engines* " *to play a little on our own*; as it is better to be " deſpiſed

" deſpiſed for too anxious apprehenſions than to be " ruined by too confident a ſecurity." Though you have (p. 356) " little to recommend your opinions " but long obſervation, and *much impartiality*;" but you " are incapable of keeping terms (p. 94) with " men, who under the name of religion, teach little " elſe than bold and dangerous politics:" and thus a humane and ſuſceptible gentleman, who is " in- " capable of a perſonal triumph over a fallen " enemy," cries, " havock, and lets ſlip the dogs of " war;" who, though he may be no prophet, ſeemed a " thorough paced" ſtateſman; for the panic, that was ſaid to be felt by the ſacred bench, and ſent, through courtiers and prieſts, like Samſon's foxes with fire-brands at their tails; into Warwickſhire, and ſeveral corporations, was, by his means, apparently communicated elſewhere, at a criſis when panics only can be of uſe. It ſeemed to me, the majority of our repreſentatives, with no great magnanimity, ſuffered, too much like the Roman governor, the voices of the " vulgar and " uninformed people," and of the chief prieſts, to prevail, and delivered up the *weak*, to the will of the *ſtrong*, *becauſe the ſtrong were in danger*; though it is a firſt principle in all legitimate governments, and the very end of all ſociety, to *protect* the weak *againſt the ſtrong*: and to deſtroy the *confidence* of the ſubject in the *juſtice of the legiſlature*, is cutting up all government by the roots. Fiat juſtitia, ruat cœlum, was formerly an axiom with us. In vain did Mr. Fox, with an unequalled, diſintereſted, and to him expenſive virtue for the time, in his admirable ſpeech, ſtate, in language as clear and as forcibly

forcibly as words could expreſs, the extreme futility of ſuch a pretence, as "danger to the church;" when I hear "the *weak cry out* againſt the *ſtrong*, "I conſider it the language of nature, and I feel a "ſympathy the God of nature intended ſhould "excite us to the relief of the diſtreſſed; but "when I hear the *ſtrong cry out* againſt the *weak*, "I conſider it as a prelude to perſecution and op-"preſſion, the language of cruelty and fraud; it is "the tears of the crocodile over its prey." It appeared, indeed, that day in the Houſe as you ſay, Sir, (p. 225) that "wiſdom is the moſt terrified "with epidemical fanaticiſm, becauſe of all enemies, "it is that againſt which ſhe is the leaſt able to fur-"niſh any kind of reſource." But it did not then ſeem to be (p. 227) "the great ſource of your ſoli-"citude, leſt any one deſcription of citizens ſhould "be brought to regard any of the others as their "proper prey." Nor was it (p. 230) "with the "greateſt difficulty you were able to ſeparate *policy* "from *juſtice*;" or that you conſidered *juſtice* as the "*great ſtanding policy of civil ſociety*; or the depar-"ture from it as *no policy at all.*" Yet this ſeemed the manly time to have ſhewn it, if you really poſſeſſed it. I remember the impreſſion made on my feelings at the moment of your ſpeech, and afterwards by the vote of the Houſe. Theſe filled my mind with indignation, ariſing from a ſenſe of great miſrepreſentation, and, as I thought, flagrant injuſtice; and before I went to bed, I drew up the following Reſolution, which at the moment, I ſhould have wiſhed the Diſſenters to have publiſhed.

'That

'That during the preſent pretended alarm of 'the epiſcopal clergy, (excited by arts, we had 'hoped to have been too late; and by the clamour 'of a numerous party of dependants, kept in pay by 'a vaſt landed revenue of ſeveral millions a year, 'greatly improved by an unparalleled perſevering 'litigation;) we have confidence in the juſtice of 'our country; and hope the civil power will be 'able, and truſt it will be willing, to protect our 'properties and lives, from the fury of a Sacheve-'relian mob, which is certainly an object of dread; 'as no *virtue*, or *innocence*, is a protection againſt 'it, as was evidenced by the very Author of our 'religion; he having been himſelf put to death, on 'a charge of ſedition, at the inſtigation of the eſta-'bliſhed prieſts of his own country, on the cry of 'a bigotted multitude, though the civil magiſtrate 'knew him to be innocent, and wiſhed to ſave his 'life.'

The very act of drawing up this reſolution, with the recollection of the circumſtances attending the fact it refers to, and the doctrine taught by that ſacred perſon to his followers, 'that it is enough 'for the diſciple to be as his maſter,' had a tendency to calm the feelings that groſs calumny and ingratitude had irritated; and after ſome hours ſleep, I next day prepared others, which I ventured to ſhew and recommend ("but (p. 334) the deli-"berations of calamity are rarely wiſe") to ſome leading men among the Diſſenters, who, though they objected to none of the principles, yet, "in the

"exerciſe

" exercise of that first of human virtues, prudence,' thought it best to publish nothing at that time; being, I doubt not, " clearly convinced, that in the " then present state of things, all opposition to " any measures proposed by the clergy, where the " name of [Dissenter] appeared, was vain and " frivolous:" as the church, that pillar of despotism, originally framed (as Mr. Rous says) " to support " a foreign dominion, still retained the spirit of its " institution, though its obedience was transferred " to the monarch; and that as its clergy were " linked and blended with the nobility, whose " younger sons, or brothers, hold its richest bene- " fices; and its power was consolidated by a landed " revenue" of 2,000,000l. a year; " a handful of " people," who had formed *no alliance* with the state, but were *merely subjects*, with *only justice* on their side, could have little hope of being patiently heard against an *ally*, who pretended to be in danger: of course, my Resolutions were not adopted; but as I am desirous you should know all the esoteric doctrines, the very arcana of us Dissenters; " this handful of people," who gave you so much uneasiness, but of whose real character, (" as " (p. 5.) you have no apostolical mission, and their " proceedings are not on the public stage, where " only you take your full share in speculating in " your private and individual capacity,") I would charitably hope you know nothing, I therefore, for your future quiet, copy these Resolutions, that conveyed my own principles, and I expect those of most other Dissenters at the time. But (p. 126) " *I*

" *speak*

" *ſpeak from obſervation, not from authority,* from the " experience I have had in a pretty extenſive and " mixed communication with the Diſſenters of this " kingdom, of all deſcriptions, begun early in life, " and continued for [30] years;" and I have generally found in politics, my own free and unbought ſentiments on public tranſactions, were thoſe of other free-men with whom I have converſed; of courſe, I hope, you will take theſe my principles as a " fair ſample:"

'That having been greatly miſrepreſented and 'traduced, by different bodies of the *epiſcopal clergy*, 'as enemies to the civil conſtitution of our country, 'we think it neceſſary in juſtification of ourſelves, 'and to prevent farther miſconceptions, to de-'clare—

'I. That in our opinion, the civil conſtitution 'of this kingdom, by king, lords, and commons, 'is the moſt perfect theory of government in the 'world; and that, as good ſubjects, we hold our-'ſelves bound, and moſt willingly engage, to de-'fend the ſame with our fortunes and lives; as alſo 'the *regular* ſucceſſion of the crown in the illuſ-'trious houſe of Hanover, as ſettled by parliament 'in the twelfth and thirteenth years of king 'William III.'

'II. That we have not the moſt diſtant inten-'tion or deſire, that ourſelves, or our miniſters, 'ſhould participate or have any ſhare in the *honours*

'or

'or *emoluments* of the epiſcopal church: on the 'contrary, it is our decided opinion and deter-'mination, that our miniſters (as miniſters of re-'ligion) ſhall ſhare our friendſhip with our wealth, 'and remain, as we think all miniſters of religion 'ought, dependant on their people."

I had drawn up a third, which I think I did not ſhew theſe gentlemen; but as I mean there ſhould be no ſecrets between you and me on this occaſion, "nothing that has the complexion of a "fraud," I will copy it for you, and inform you beſides, that I wrote it in anſwer to ſome of the clergy's Reſolutions.

'III. That though there are great numbers 'among the epiſcopal clergy, whom *individually* we '*reſpect* and *honour*, yet we ſhould think ourſelves '*degraded* by a controverſy with a *body of eccle-'ſiaſticks*; as we know that "none are ſo blind as "thoſe that *will not* ſee;" and we cannot reſtrain 'ourſelves from obſerving *in their own words* (but 'for reaſons infinitely more obvious to the com-'mon ſenſe of all men, and manifeſted by the hiſ-'tory of all nations, as well as our own) "That it "is our humble, yet firm and decided opinion, that "as a *good* government cannot give "ECCLE-"SIASTICKS too much *eaſe*, ſo a *wiſe* govern-"ment *cannot* truſt them with too little POWER."

I pretend not to propheſy, as "I have no reve-"velations of my own," whether the people of England,

England, who you ſay "have diſtinguiſhing ears," would have heard at that time what Diſſenters had to ſay, or whether they would have given credit to any thing not coming from their own prieſts; nor can I tell what you and other ſtateſmen might think of ſuch ſentiments: but if, as you recommend (p. 50) "they would chuſe nature, rather "than ſpeculations, or their own breaſts rather "than their inventions," I do not think they would find any thing materially wrong in them: But the ferment was much greater, than I thought it in the power of the clergy to raiſe; and more a great deal than could have been in their power, but for a circumſtance that I believe has never before happened ſince the laſt year of queen Ann, of tory memory, and, perhaps, not ſince the time of the abdicated tyrant, James II.; the influence of the court being heartily united with the body of the clergy, againſt the body of Diſſenters.

On a former occaſion, when an intolerant, unprincipled, deteſtable mob, ſurrounded the houſe of commons to obtain a repeal of a law, that only partially, and very inadequately, relieved the Engliſh catholics from ſome very grievous oppreſſions; your courage and magnanimity were conſpicuous, and very commendable, and gave me a great deal of pleaſure: you were then, and ſay you are ſtill (p. 87) "far from denying in theory, full as far was "your heart from with-holding in practice, the "*real rights of men*:" You could admit "if civil "ſociety

" ſociety be made for the advantage of men, *all the* " *advantages for which it was made*, become his " right;" That it is an inſtitution of beneficence, and " law itſelf is only beneficence acting by a rule;" " Men have a right to live by that rule, they have a " *right to juſtice*:" You did not forget (p. 221) " that juſtice and mercy were ſubſtantial parts of " religion; that impious men ought not, and did " not, recommend themſelves to the community " by iniquity and cruelty towards any deſcription " of their fellow-creatures:" " You did not (p. 13) " wiſh to confine power, authority, and diſtinction, " to blood, and names, and titles:" Had you, Sir, " followed up (p. 325) the principle of this reaſon- " ing," in the caſe of us Diſſenters; " and com- " pleted the analogy of your conduct," you would not have furniſhed out ſo full a triumph for the prieſthood, jacobites, and high-flying tories of the day; who ſeemed to conſider it as extreme modera- tion, not to have moved the houſe of commons for a committee of enquiry, concerning the ſecret practices of the Diſſenters, and played the *ſtate* " *engines upon* " *us a little, as our neighbour's houſe*," in France, " *was on fire*:" or, perhaps, the not inſtantly bring- ing in a bill for the immediate baniſhment of all ſectaries, in the true ſpirit of the archbiſhop of Valencia; who promiſed the king of Spain, if he would clear the land of heretics, that God would give him the government of the world. To uſe your words (p. 225) " The writings and ſermons " of [ſome of] the clergy, filled a [tory] populace

" with

" with a black and ſavage atrocity of mind, which " endangered in them the common feelings of " nature;" at leaſt in ſome parts of the country eſpecially in ſome corporation towns, where court influence is moſt generally felt; and the inſults on the whigs were proportioned; huzzas, ringing of bells (eſpecially where Diſſenters lived) pageants, and all ſorts of demonſtrations of joy; more perhaps to mortify Diſſenters, than to gratify their own prieſts, who have infinitely more influence with the ignorant, to excite enmity againſt ſectaries, that are never heard in their own defence, than of doing good among them; as I know by a conſtant mixture among different ranks that are not Diſſenters, to whom my profeſſion is an unſuſpicious paſſport, and where I often hear the clergy freely cenſured, and find great numbers, not ſectaries, deſcribe them as a meddling, officious, troubleſome order.

A friend of mine, happening to paſs through one of theſe ringing towns, aſked a man on the road, what the bells were ringing for? who anſwered, " That the church and Diſſenters had been " to law, and the church had got the day."

It is not impoſſible, but at ſome future day, this country may happen to have real ſtateſmen in power, (for ſuch this country affords) to whom it may become an invaluable fact to know, that there are great numbers of people, diſperſed over the nation, zealouſly inclined to any juſt reform, that the legiſlative power of this country may, in its wiſdom think fit

to ordain; and heartily diſpoſed to co-oporate with the civil power, in diſtributing equal juſtice to all its ſubjects; though it ſhould be to leſſen the influence, or, if it becomes neceſſary to curb the inſolence, of a body of men, who in paſt ages, kept the civil magiſtrate in a very degraded condition.

I can inform the higher powers, that the returns of the clergy of the numbers of Diſſenters, are too imperfect to be relied on. In one pariſh, a curate came to a gentleman, (if you will allow a *Diſſenter* can be one) and after ſtating his eccleſiaſtical commiſſion, and ſecret inſtructions, enquired of the gentleman, the name of his ſect, the numbers of their community, and many other ridiculous queſtions; which the gentleman (ſmoking his employers) anſwered with truth as far as he told, but in a ludicrous way; (though not like Mr. Mo—th, in a text of ſcripture, for which, in the laſt year of queen Ann, to gratify the convocation then ſitting, he was expelled the privy council of Ireland;) but which anſwers ſeemed to ſatisfy the poor curate; who of courſe made his return with as little preciſion, as probably many others do; who ſtate as facts, what they wiſh to be true; expecting no doubt, great commendation; as one did at the viſitation of Mr. Archdeacon Knight, when he told him he could glory, that he had not a *Diſ*-ſenter in his pariſh; but whoſe liberal ſpirit induced him to reply, he thought it "of more importance to ſay, "he had no *ab*-ſenter."

I confeſs,

I confeſs, Sir, I was not remarkably ſtruck with the proof of your good citizenſhip, when I read, what appeared to me like inculcating a ſpirit of reſiſtance to the legiſlative power of the country; where you ſay (p. 149) "the nation have never "ſuffered, *and never will ſuffer*, the fixed eſtate of "the church to be converted into a penſion to de-"pend on the treaſury." I will venture to propheſy, with juſt as good "a new revelation of my "own" as yourſelf, that the nation will feel no "great reluctance, nor any reluctance at all, to the fixed eſtate of the church "being applied in any "way that the legiſlative power of the country in its wiſdom, may from time to time ſee fit*; either in relief of the national debt, making the clergy its creditors to receive the dividend; or in aid of our heavy taxes; or otherwiſe, as the legiſlature may ſee beſt; withour the "horror of ſacrilege," or any ſuſpicion of *the want of faith in parliament*; or any "dread of reſumption of the ſpoils, with the addi-"tion of puniſhment to execrable wretches, who "could become purchaſers at the auction:" For as an elegant writer ſays, "we conſider benefices,

* In the year 1385, when Richard II. having aſſembled a parliament in order toprocure a ſupply, he found the laity willing to grant one fifteenth and a half, provided one tenth and a half were given by the clergy. This conditional offer they thought proper to reſent; and Courtney, archbiſhop of Canterbury, declared, "That the clergy "were free, and were only to be taxed by themſelves; and that he "would ſooner loſe his head, than ſuffer the *holy church of England*, "to be reduced under the *ſervitude of laymen*." So haughty an anſwer rouſed the indignation and reſentment, not only of the *commons*, but of *many* peers, who affirmed, that it was neceſſary to humble their pride, by ſeizing the temporalities of the clergy, and that *nothing would render them uſeful to the ſtate but reducing them to poverty*.—— Sir John Sinclair's Hiſtory of the Public Revenue, p. 86.

" tythes, &c. and all church property, as already " appropriated by parliament to certain uſes, and " conſigned to a certain order *in truſt*, but not *in* " *right*, and *not as property*. No doubt is enter- " tained with us, that parliament may regulate, " controul, and correct the abuſes of that truſt, " and change the uſes of its funds, if found detri- " mental to the public." And we conſider the pretended ſuperſtitious zeal of the clergy for their ſucceſſors to be mere cant. I remember a friend of mine ſaying, his father held a ſmall farm by leaſe, from a deceaſed biſhop: the tenant ſet up a brick-kiln on part of the land, which the biſhop being informed of ſent for him, and expoſtulated with him, for waſting the church lands; alledging he had a value for him, but that as it was church land, he could not *in conſcience, for the ſake of his ſucceſſor*, conſent to the continuance of the kiln: the tenant pleaded the great uſe it was of to him, and the little injury it would be of in the end to the eſtate, but nothing would overcome the good old biſhop's *conſcience*: At length a ſum of money was propoſed, and accepted; and the biſhop's ſucceſſors no doubt have the money in their pockets to this day, accumulating like queen Ann's bounty, ſome of which is curiouſly laid out. If theſe kind of pretences, about conſcientious care for their ſucceſſors, are laughed at now, we have as little reaſon to fear, that (p. 149) " the people of England will have " conſtitutional motives, or any man of ſenſe, any " religious ones, againſt any project of turning their " independent clergy into eccleſiaſtical penſioners

" of

" of the ſtate." But they had great cauſe, in paſt ages, " to tremble for their liberties, from the in-" fluence of a clergy, *independent* of the crown (con-" ſidered as the civil power) finding it an impe-rium in imperio; and if the people underſtood the matter " they would tremble for the public tran-" quility, from the diſorders of a factious clergy, " were they made to depend" on any other than the *people themſelves*; which is, and has been, the caſe among the Diſſenters for centuries, without any in-convenience whatever: If, therefore, the people have " made their *church* [*i. e.* their clergy] like their " king and their nobles, independant," I think they have acted unſcripturally, unreaſonably, and like ideots, in giving themſelves ſuch *maſters*, eſpe-cially with a revenue of two millions a year; col-lected in a great degree from their own pockets, in the moſt baneful, and pernicious way poſſible; to be teazed and worried by ſpiritual courts, and proc-tors, without end, or meaſure; and now too, when it is ſuſpected ſome of " the clergy (p. 220) have " unhappily found out the method, which Burnet " ſays, they had in France in 1683, of carrying " over to their party the men of the fineſt parts, " by bringing them to doubt of the whole chriſtian " religion, which of courſe makes them indifferent " of what ſide or form they continue outwardly;" and of courſe (p. 151) " find it difficult to make " others believe in a ſyſtem to which they give no " credit themſelves;" inſomuch that the maxim of thinking with the wiſe, and acting with the vulgar, is become too prevalent. Even you yourſelf " have

" ſerved too much of this French ſpirit among " them;" which is a great thing for you to allow in a church, which you " determine to be kept in its " preſent ſtate, and to have always in your mind, " firſt, and laſt, and midſt, and inſeparably with the " ſtate." We Diſſenters are come to think, that we here diſcover, the very eſſence, and true reaſon, why we are ill-treated, and traduced, and ſo much ſpoken againſt, that in fact it is, becauſe we will not be hypocrites; for would we act with the vulgar; *profeſs* the articles, either in the true, or any other ſenſe; and conform outwardly, we ſhould be excuſed, thinking with the wiſe; only conſent, non quieta movere, and then we might laugh at patriotiſm, with the great: at religion, with ſome of the clergy: and with a cardinal Bellarmine, or ſome ſuch name, at the ſame " *fable of Jeſus.*" Yet you, Sir, ſay (p. 133) " our conſtitution is formed under " the auſpices, and confirmed by the ſanction, of " religion and piety:" (p. 134.) " That we know " and feel, that religion is the baſis of civil ſociety; " and the ſource of all good and comfort:" " (p. 234) That the body of all true religion con- " ſiſts in obedience to the will of the Sovereign of " the world, in a confidence in his declarations, and " in an imitation of his perfections." Why, therefore, ought any man to ſuffer a civil inconvenience, much leſs reproach, for his ſincerity in religion? If ever any ſerious perſecution is to happen among us in this country, *this* will be the touchſtone:—The great, not believing a word about revelation, will conſider all who do, as hypocrites; and will treat them

them as cheats. Voltaire ſays, chriſtianity will be forgotten in leſs than three hundred years: I am contemplating ſuch a period, when the clergy of the day, (whether "the elegant mythology of the "Greeks," or any other religion, ſhall be eſtabliſhed,) will of courſe, ſide with their creators; the powers that be, as it is fit they ſhould. Even you, Sir, ſeem to think (p. 219) "the utter abo-"lition of chriſtianity, under any of its forms, is "intended in ſome countries, whenever the minds "of men are prepared for it, by bringing its mi-"niſters into univerſal contempt." At preſent the great patrons appoint to benefices; and, if to churches near, they get the clergyman appointed a juſtice; who, of courſe, does all the low work among the rags, and game, of his neighbourhood; and occaſionally among the ſectaries too, where ſuch infeſt it. Before this time comes, while the croſs is on our cathedrals, and churches, and of courſe we are not aſhamed to talk of a crucified Saviour, I would only beſpeak, on behalf of my deſcendants, who I hope will be then chriſtians, the candour and patience of the great, to command the tools they will employ as perſecutors, wherever they find virtue and integrity in outward actions ("the only "language (p. 150) that rarely lives") to "tem-"per the wind to the ſhorn lamb."

In reflecting on your ſpeech, and pamphlet, I have been trying to find any ſufficient motive for your illiberality to the Diſſenters; but though

I have heard they had virtue to reject you at Briſtol, becauſe you had alſo the virtue to refuſe to promote a reform in parliament, as you ſay you think it wrong; I cannot think that a ſufficient reaſon for ſo much virulence and injuſtice, as to repreſent us (p. 94) as "*bad* citizens, and perfectly "*unſure* connections" (for I find we are generally underſtood to be all included, and all alike); this, in fact, is delivering us over to the government as *rebels*, and depriving us at the ſame time, of *connections* to befriend us: I have thought it poſſible you might be miſtaken in our real character, and as I am unwilling to believe you have a bad heart, will you forgive me, Sir, if I uſe a little egotiſm (as my betters have uſed a great deal) and, as I am one of the middle rank among Diſſenters, know many of them, and their general principles and conduct, and can give you tolerably well their character, I will ſtate my own conduct as a ſample, (as I cannot miſtake myſelf) of which, though I have no ground to boaſt, I am, nevertheleſs, not aſhamed, nor am I ſingular, but I do not exhibit myſelf *as among our beſt*, ſo you will make thoſe allowances at leaſt, which you aſked for yourſelf, and ſomething more, as I am "a country attor-"ney:"—I have a little property, ſo diſperſed as to enable me to vote in four counties, and every vote in my life has been on the ſide of liberty, as I thought, however, it has always been on the ſide of the whigs, and the name of Cavendiſh has been my pole-ſtar, as moſt probably that of Fox will be in future.—

future.—I have never put any gentleman I voted for to any expence whatever; have never *received* or *aſked* any favour of any member of parliament, not even a franked letter; nor certainly of any miniſter, nor of any candidate I voted for; nor ever raiſed an expectation in a candidate, that I did not, as far as I know, fully anſwer. So far as a "*perfectly unſure connection.*"—Next, *as a bad citizen:* I have punctually paid every tax laid upon me by the legiſlature; have ſcrupulouſly avoided every ſpecies of ſmuggling; have always obeyed the civil laws, and civil magiſtrate; have had no perſonal difference with the clergy, nor quarrelled with any man about his religion. I adopt Pope's prayer, aſk only the mercy and liberty for myſelf, that I am willing to grant to others. I have quietly, and as inoffenſively as poſſible, lived peaceably with all men; and have by honeſt induſtry, frugality, and prudence, through very many ſlights and jeers, much oppoſition, and ſome oppreſſion for being a a Diſſenter, acquired a moderate competence, ſufficent to retain my preſent ſtation in ſociety, independant of my profeſſion; and am ſitting at eaſe, by my fire-ſide, fearleſs of the threatened church aſſociations; but with an hearty inclination, though a ſectarian, of doing any man, of any religion, or country, any ſervice in my power; and have unſpeakable pleaſure in ſeeing great part of the world in a *certain train* of being *free* and happy.—I feel a conſciouſneſs of integrity, and a ſtern virtue, and "love a manly, moral, regulated liberty, as well as "any gentleman," which will not ſuffer me to bow,

bow, and cringe, and of courſe, I cannot feel myſelf pleaſed with the reflection of the ſtigma of the Teſt Laws, eſpecially as I frequently feel their effects.

You admit, Sir, (p. 136) "it is the prerogative "of man, to be in a great degree, the creature of "his own making, and when made as he ought, is "deſtined to hold no trivial place in the creation." Moſt men of great reading (I would have ſaid "*philoſophers*," or *liberal and enlightened*" men, but you have ſo belaboured the terms, that I queſtion whether they will not now get out of uſe) have ſuppoſed, education made the man, and you ſay (p. 148) "our education is in a manner wholly in "the hands of eccleſiaſtics, in all ſtages, from in-"fancy to manhood:" as I was born and brought up a churchman, and was educated in part by my pariſh prieſt, I do not know whether I ſhall be conſidered as competent to form a proper opinion on the ſubject; but for my children, I ſhould certainly prefer, as a tutor, a philoſopher to a prieſt; the firſt will endeavour to make *men*; the latter generally aim at making *tools*, ſubſervient to their hierarchy: with a predilection for the church (for I remember I had heard of Echard's ſtory of Oliver Cromwell and the devil's converſation in the wood; and did not doubt but Diſſenters killed king Charles *the martyr*; and, being a boy, I believed Diſſenters in my days were all king-killers) I was no ways diſpoſed to think well of them; a variety of circumſtances intirely unforeſeen and unexpected, brought me acquainted with ſome of their writings, and in courſe

courſe with their perſons; and from a patient hearing, I proceeded to candid examination, which by degrees, with ſome reluctance on my part, produced conviction, at leaſt of my own ſuperſtition and bigotry; and at length, near thirty years ſince, I became a Diſſenter on principle, and a chriſtian on conviction, inſtead of *education* and *prejudice*.—I now believe chriſtianity becauſe it appears to me to be founded on *evidence*, *argument*, and *reaſon*, having no need of the precarious prejudices of education, which you make ſo great account of (p. 129) "as engaging the mind in a ſteady courſe of wiſdom "and virtue." I more than doubt, if I had nothing better, whether Mr. Gibbon's Roman Hiſtory, would not have deſtroyed the whole fabric, and I much wonder, how after reading ſuch authors, it can be expected that (p. 154) "men can ſee "without pain and grudging," church magiſtrates, mitred fronts, palaces, thrones, and 10,000l. a year for ſucceſſors of fiſhermen and tent-makers; or how can it be talked of with a ſerious countenance, to men of common ſenſe, without expecting to ſee "a ſigh, or a ſmile." Things might be kept on by *prejudice*, while the prieſts licenſed the preſs; but now, good ſenſe, and equal juſtice, ſeem the only competent means of ſecuring the public quiet, by intereſting all honeſt men in the execution of equal laws. I am exceedingly happy (and ought to be ſo, if chriſtianity is a bleſſing) to have met with the writings of Dr. Prieſtley, on the ſubject of chriſtianity; though highly as I honour that gentleman, and think him unjuſtly treated even by you,

but

but ſcandalouſly abuſed by ſeveral of your ſacred prieſts, I yet never ſaw him in my life. I do not think I could have eſcaped deiſm, had I only my old prejudices to ſupport me, and I had meant to be honeſt, however much I might have choſen to have cheriſhed them. I have not the means, nor the ability, of ſuſtaining any conſpicuous character among Diſſenters; I have read moſt of Dr. Price's works; his general political principles, I moſt heartily approve, and venerate the man, but I never ſpoke to him in my life; nor attended any Revolution ſermon, or meeting at the London tavern, nor belong to the Revolution Society, or, as you call it, "The Society for Revolutions;" of courſe I have ſome claim to *your* candour and patience. I had not been uſed to feel individually, any particular diſlike to the body of the clergy, till on our late application to parliament for the repeal of the Teſt Laws, the violent and too general oppoſition of that body to it, compelled me to believe they were enemies, by profeſſion, to equal liberty and juſtice; and as they take great pains to prove that the eſtabliſhed church (meaning, I expect, their *own order*) cannot exiſt without the Teſt Laws, and I cannot help ſeeing, and feeling, the Teſt Laws are founded in injuſtice and oppreſſion, it is impoſſible for me to wiſh the continuance of that hierarchy, or not to feel pleaſure, in the expectation of its extinction; not that I ſhould think it lawful to uſe any violence to effect it; but as an honeſt man, I ought to prefer juſtice to forms. Fiat juſtitia ruat cœlum, is a venerable maxim in our law; and

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in becoming a Diſſenter, I cannot ſee I have become a worſe ſubject, I am ſure I am as ſincere a chriſtian, and as moral a man; and I can but feel more of *indignation* than of *ſhame*, to find my integrity has *ſifted* me from my civil rights in ſociety, or from eligibility, by a kind of eccleſiaſtical Teſt, which as the reſpectable Barnſtaple and Coventry gentlemen reſolve, ought to ſhut the doors againſt me, with "heretics, jews, turks, and infidels:" for, on account of this Teſt, I cannot, like others in my profeſſion, be deputy, or under-ſheriff, for my own clients, becauſe I am a Diſſenter; and yet, as our clients generally think well of us, while they employ us, the inconvenience falls on us both; not that I have any wiſh to be in that ſituation, or in fact would accept it, as I prefer a more private life; yet the law ought to leave me at liberty.

A community muſt be greatly corrupted, and its principles ſhockingly debaſed, that can ſee without abhorrence and indignation, individuals, or any portion of the community, under whatever name, or deſcription, *proſcribed*, or marked out for puniſhment or plunder, either by *biſhops*, or *ſtateſmen*, without a previous crimination: virtuous and free "men will prefer a general liberty, a common "happineſs, to the melancholy privilege of being "diſtinguiſhed in ſlavery, by ſome ſlight advan-"tages;" yet this mean, ſelfiſh principle, is not only applied to us Diſſenters, in the Teſt Laws, but found its way into the laſt houſe of commons, and ſhould it increaſe there in any great degree, the country

country will be loſt. When the bill for extending to the tobacconiſts, "the odious, deteſtable ſyſtem "of exciſe, (which renders every man whom it "touches a ſlave to the ruling power)," was before the houſe of commons; an apparently prevailing argument for its paſſing into a law, was, that there were only about three hundred people who would be affected by it; the ſame might be ſaid as to wine merchants; and one by one, we may be "all "pulled out for ſlaughter." This is manifeſtly the caſe in the duty on licenſes; only few pay that tax at preſent; but the principle is extending itſelf rapidly, and, as the influence of the miniſter increaſes by it, the people get in the ſame proportion corrupted. If ſuch arguments as theſe get to ſtand in courts of law, in the place of reaſon and juſtice; (p. 198) "men of honour and virtue, and talents, muſt be "fugitives; as a brave people will certainly prefer "liberty, accompanied with a virtuous poverty, to a "dependant and wealthy ſervitude." They will think "there are no evils for which liberty does "not offer a conſolation; no advantages which can "compenſate its loſs." This ſelfiſh principle was remarkably exemplified in our caſe, by thoſe of the clergy who call themſelves the *awakened*; the adminiſtering a ſacred ordinance, to thoſe they think profane men, has frequently been a complaint, by them to us, and others: ſome of our Diſſenters were ſo ignorant of the ſpirit of this order, as to ſuppoſe, they would unite in an application for the repeal of a law, that impoſed it; but they miſtook the ſoil; l'eſprit de corps is with them, like the eſtabliſhment

with

with you, Sir, "first, and laſt, and midſt, in their "minds;" and not a voice was heard from that quarter, on behalf of the repeal. The order ſeem, on this occaſion, to have outdone themſelves; they even made the "reſpectful invitation of the Diſ-"ſenters to a co-operation," a formal ground of diſavowal, oppoſition and illiberal *abuſe*; and for ſounding Sacheverel's brazen trump, that *the church was in danger*, in this "alarming criſis;" which their writers ſince ſay, fully juſtified the popular cry; though others of the clergy, in their reſolutions, pretended to "hope in God, that the cry of the "church being in danger, would never again be "echoed through the land." Some of this body ſeem willing to blind one eye of their own, if they can but put out both ours; and they have had ſufficient art to communicate this ſpirit to part, (a ſmall part I hope) of "the congregation of faithful men," who ſeem indifferent to their own ſufferings, if they can but increaſe ours. How long this corporation ſpirit may continue will depend on other cauſes than theſe "directors of the public mind;" but, if this wicked diſpoſition ſhould aſcend to our legiſlators, it would be high time to lay aſide all bigotry, and party, and unitedly betake ourſelves to a ſerious remonſtrance.

You, Sir, admit, (p. 207) that "it is not very "juſt to chaſtiſe men for the offences of their na-"tural anceſtors;" but to "take the fiction of an-"ceſtry in a corporate ſucceſſion, as a ground of "puniſhing thoſe who have no relation to the guilty "acts,

"acts, except in names and general deſcriptions, is "a ſort of refinement in injuſtice, belonging to "to the philoſophers" (ſay rather *church politicians*) "of this enlightened age." (p. 209) "Wiſe men "apply remedies to *vices*, not to *names*;" and, (p. 159) "of what import is it under what name "you injure men." To be ſure (p. 222) "in "England they favour and they tolerate; they to- "lerate, not becauſe they deſpiſe opinions, but be- "cauſe they reſpect juſtice; they reverence, and "affectionately protect all religions, becauſe they "venerate the great principle on which all agree, "and *begin to ſee*, that they have *all* a common "cauſe againſt a common enemy." Yet, Sir, even you had (p. 220) "no doubt but ſome *mi-* "*ſerable bigots* would be found here, as well elſe- "where, who *hate ſects and parties*, different from "their own, *more than they love* the ſubſtance of "*religion*, and who are *more angry* with thoſe that "differ from them *in plans* and *ſyſtems*, *than diſpleaſed* "with thoſe *who attack* the foundation of *our com-* "*mon hope*: that theſe men would ſpeak and write "on the ſubject in the manner that is to be ex- "pected from their tempers and characters." Accordingly we find large bodies of the epiſcopal clergy meeting, and writing very ſevere and bitter things againſt us Diſſenters, quite in the ſpirit of their order. The very critically learned, orthodox, and right worſhipful, Mr. Archdeacon Travis (who ſome foreigners ſay, is half a century behind in literature; and we Diſſenters hope, a full century behind in politics; and who ſeems in danger of being

conſidered

conſidered by Mr. Porſon, "as degraded from that "rank in literature, which entitles one writer to "challenge another;") with the whole body of his learned clergy, called together by the trump of the *dean and chapter* of Cheſter, (a ſort of church watch-men I ſuppoſe, met and reſolved as follows, *unanimouſly*:

"That for reaſons and conſiderations," (ſtated in a previous reſolution) "as it is our earneſt deſire "on the one hand, that they who *diſſent* from the "eſtabliſhed worſhip ſhould enjoy a complete tole-"leration in the *offices of religion*; ſo it is equally our "wiſh on the other hand, that they may be *ex-*"*cluded* from the *civil offices* of the ſtate; it being "our humble, yet firm and decided opinion, that "as a *good* government cannot give them too much "eaſe, ſo a *wiſe* government cannot give them too "little power."

Query, Is not this inſulting the oppreſſed?

Mr. Zouch and his clergy, not the "enlightened "clan," met, and reſolved alſo as follows, "unani-"mouſly:"

"That there are great numbers of *Diſſenters*, "*whom individually*, we reſpect and honour; and "though we are not *now inclined* to conteſt the *ve-*"*racity* of thoſe who aſſert, that 'they will not 'give any ſanction, or ſupport, to the indiſcreet 'warmth of any individual;' yet if this is meant to "allude to ſome of their own leaders, theſe, it is "well known, have their warm adherents.——

" That, whatever was the behaviour of the Diſ-
" ſenters, ' for the ſpace of one whole century;'
" and particularly in two critical periods; when
" they affirm, that there was not a ſingle Proteſtant
" Diſſenter who joined the hoſtile banners of a
" pretender to the throne, or was ſuſpected of an
" attachment to his cauſe; *we* cannot forget, that
" in the compaſs of the laſt century, they had nearly
" effected the ruin of *our church*, and monarchy."

N.B. This is viſiting the ſins of the fathers upon the children, beyond the third and fourth generation, and as you ſay, " is not very juſt; (p. 207) " they might draw more moral leſſons from hiſ-
" tory," than " adding fuel to civil fury;" but my father was a churchman, and perhaps his great grand-father, was a cavalier, and a tory; and poſſibly, even a " *malignant*."

The Society *for promoting chriſtian knowledge*, ſeem to have taken care to expend a good part of the money, collected *for promoting chriſtian knowledge*, in cenſuring their diſſenting neighbours; becauſe they had given them, " *great uneaſineſs and* " *alarm*;" for fear no doubt the repeal of the Teſt Acts, ſhould *hinder the promotion of chriſtian knowledge*.

In one arch deaconry, the chairman, and *nineteen* clergymen; (for ought appears obſcure individuals, perhaps educated by the public charity of the country, to which probably our own anceſtors might largely contribute;) met and declared, " the preſent attempt

" attempt of Diſſenters, in this age of religious li-
" berty, could only be founded in a *thirſt after*
" *power*; and was replete with alarm, to every friend
" of the civil conſtitution."

Is it poſſible, Sir, for us as independant and virtuous men, to expreſs ſufficient aſtoniſhment, that twenty obſcure individuals ſhould have the temerity thus to traduce the whole body of Diſſenters?

In Coventry, the chairman, a phyſician, from whoſe general knowledge we might expect liberality, (but whoſe intereſt, perhaps, might be concerned) and his " numerous and reſpectable" friends, unanimouſly reſolved, " to oppoſe, with their ut-
" moſt vigour, the project of the Diſſenters, for ob-
" taining the repeal of the Teſt Acts, which, under
" providence, had long preſerved them from" *the moſt cruel ſpecies of deſpotiſm*, " *the tyranny of the many.*"

This ſeems, to be ſure, a curious argument from a *majority*: Had we Diſſenters uſed it, it might have been a libel, as it would have been *true.*

At Bolton-le-Moors, *the churchwardens* (with the prieſt at their elbow no doubt) convened, a " *numerous and reſpectable*" meeting into a *grammar-ſchool*, where they declared their unanimous opinion, that " our efforts were injurious to ourſelves;" that the repeal of thoſe bulwarks, the Teſt Acts, would certainly *open a door* for Jews, Turks, Infidels and

Heretics, to come into places of power; they lament that the national tranquility ſhould be diſturbed, by the reſolutions Diſſenters daily printed, and induſtriouſly diſperſed over the whole kingdom, to inflame the minds of the "*vulgar and un-*"*informed*;" but, being ſorry to ſpeak out, they ſtudied to avoid all harſh terms, and illiberal expreſſions, as ill becoming the *chriſtian*, and the *gentleman*; *(as no doubt the churchwardens and grammar ſchoolmen were;)* and they ſincerely wiſhed for the ſake of harmony, and religion, that we Diſſenters, would "ſtudy to be quiet, and do our own buſineſs."

To be ſure, we Diſſenters are known to have great influence over the "vulgar and uninformed" populace; but (p. 352) "they who know what "virtuous liberty is, cannot bear to ſee it diſgraced."

The corporation of Barnſtable, "and many "others," in their Guildhall, were alſo "alarmed "at the attempts of us Diſſenters," as "*all innova-*"*tions* cannot but be attended with *great danger*; "that they were led to ſuſpect, from the paſt con-"duct of Diſſenters, that our motives were thoſe "of *private intereſt*, and not a zeal for religious "liberty;" and by abrogating the Teſt Acts, a *door would be opened* for us to powerful and lucrative offices; that the experience of the *laſt century* evinced, how unworthy they were to be truſted with high offices; the enjoyment of which they ſo ſhamefully abuſed.

Again

Again viſiting the ſins of the fathers on their children.

I have extracted ſufficient from the reſolutions of the *twenty* "reſpectable and numerous meetings" of clergy and tories; which, (to quote the language of Dr. Franklin) "are all villanous and malicious lies, "which to do them juſtice, not one of them believes, "though they would have the mob believe them."

But I remember, there was one "numerous and "and reſpectable" meeting in a pariſh church, in London, called I underſtand by the brother of a biſhop's regiſter, where they reſolved, that there was, and *ought to be, an analogy* between the church and ſtate; and as in the temporal kingdom there was a monarch; ſo in the ſpiritual they reſolved, to have ſome, or one, (I forget which) nor do I recollect whether they determined the two archbiſhops were their two monarchs, or whether there was to be one in every pariſh church; but as I remember, *religious liberty* did not ſeem to be thought of by theſe gentlemen; it was thrown aſide with the "rights of men," thoſe "paltry blurred ſhreds."

The Suffolk reſolutions, in Stow-Market church, were no doubt meant as an electioneering trick, which *for once* ſucceeded with the "vulgar and "uninformed;" but if the Suffolk Diſſenters keep united, and put their candidate to no expence, one thouſand ſingle votes, will ſoon weary their enemies, in hiring ſlaves to out-number them.

In all the *twenty* meetings, whether in pariſh churches, grammar-ſchools, guild-halls, or moot-halls, whoſe reſolutions the parties have dared to publiſh, I expect not one half as many epiſcopalians of all ranks, troubled themſelves about the Diſſenters application, as there were Diſſenters who applied for relief; but the clergy! the clergy! Sir, in ſome of the archdeaconries, are a legion of embodied and determined enemies, who, "like ſtaunch "hunters, ſteady to their purpoſe," never part with a pin of the tabernacle, to ſave a million of ſectaries.

Your partizans, Sir, particularly the clergy, in their late pamphlets, ſermons, charges &c. ſpeak thus of us:

"It was but a ſlight remove from the violence "of the puritans, to the licentiouſneſs of the inde-"pendants: a diſavowal of *the beggarly elements of* "*juſtice and humanity*, was a natural conſequence of "the violation of divine and human laws."—

"In proceedings which reſulted from theſe prin-"ciples and purſuits, the *Diſſenters confounded reli-"gion with human policy*, and employed it as a veil "for their licentiouſneſs and outrages."

"The unremitting aſſiduity with which Diſ-"ſenters diſſeminate invectives againſt the church "eſtabliſhment, and the induſtry with which they "excite each other to an oppoſition to the *NE-"CESSARY LAWS* of this realm, argue a temper *inimical*

" *inimical to all order*, and particularly hoſtile to re-
" ligious ſubordination."—

" That a Diſſenter, whatever may be his in-
" tegrity and piety, whatever may be the ground of
" his diſſent, is an unfit perſon to be truſted with
" command, authority, and *influence in any ſtate*, in
" which the civil magiſtrate takes a *particular*
" *church* under his protection, is an axiom in
" politics."

" Their *bigotry*, by annexing *no guilt to religious*
" *opinions*, has given a ſanction to ſuch an inunda-
" tion of licentious comment on the word of God,
" that it is a *ſhame to recite*, what is daily delivered
" in public."—

" If according to lord Bacon's aſſertion " all
" allow that it is raſh to truſt our bodies, and the
" care of our health, to empyrical phyſicians; much
" more raſh muſt all *neceſſarily* allow it to be, to
" *truſt our ſouls*, and the care of *our ſpiritnal wel-*
" *fare*, *empyrical*, *ſelf-ordained* miniſters; who with
" no better qualification than ſuper-abundance of
" indiſcreet zeal, profeſs themſelves teachers of the
" law; underſtanding neither what they ſay, nor
" whereof they affirm. 1 Tim. i. 6, 7."

I could quote without number or end, from modern charges and ſermons, where Diſſenters are traduced and libelled, in all manner of ways, beyond decency, and without bounds; but I have little

leiſure, and a ſcanty library, and this ſhort ſpecimen ſhall ſuffice.

"This prattling of their's," as you ſay, Sir, (p. 184) hardly deſerves the name of ſophiſtry; "it "is nothing but *plain impudence.* There are, indeed, (p. 348) "ſome follies which baffle arguments, "which go beyond ridicule, and which excite no "feeling in us but diſguſt." With this kind of treatment of us ſectaries, in *churches* and *pulpits*, (where you ſay, (p. 120) "no ſound ought to be "heard, but the healing voice of chriſtian charity; "as politics and the pulpit are terms that have "little agreement; and the cauſe of civil liberty, and "civil government, gains as little, as that of reli-"gion by this confuſion of duties.") I, though a Diſſenter, think with you, that "a *theatre* is a "better ſchool for moral ſentiments, than a *church* "where feelings of humanity are thus outraged;" unleſs the theatre, (which might be an excellent mode of inſtruction, if cleanſed from obſcenity and nonſenſe) is alſo under the dominion of the prieſthood, and then we might ſee little difference. It is ſaid the prieſts in Moliere's time had ſufficient power, with the court of France, to get one of his plays forbid; in which the character of Tartuffe, a pretended hypocritical villain, was introduced with the conduct, craft, and ſpirit of a prieſt, but in the dreſs of a layman; the prieſts found their wickedneſs laſhed on his back, and their godly grimaces ridiculed; of courſe the author was called an atheiſt. This ſtage and their church then ſeemed the ſame; but

but now, Sir, the times ſeem altered; and you ſtate, with lamentable cry, a contrary courſe, when on the ſame French ſtage the maſſacre of Paris was repreſented, and the cardinal of Lorraine, *in his robes of function*, was introduced on the ſtage as giving orders for the maſſacre; and yet, you ſay (p. 210) "the author was not ſent to the *gallies*, "nor the players ſent to the houſe of correction." The gallies, and the whipping-houſe, Sir, are eaſy things for you great men to talk about, who are never ſent there: but humanity and juſtice muſt be groſsly violated, to inflict ſuch puniſhments, for expoſing *church villainies*; and I preſume no more was intended; but great men are (p. 121) "prin-"cipal actors, and can weigh in ſcales, hung up in "ſhops of horror, ſo much actual crime, againſt ſo "much contingent advantage; and after putting in "and out weights, (in which Diſſenters can take no "ſhare) can declare, the balance to be on the ſide "of the church:" becauſe, (p. 90) "that which "in the firſt inſtance is prejudicial, may be ex-"cellent in its remoter operation; and its excel-"lence may ariſe even from the ill effects it pro-"duces in the beginning." "We (p. 121) who "are uſed to follow on the *theatre* our natural im-"pulſes, ſhould ſee at the firſt intuitive glance, that "this political computation would juſtify every "extent of crime:" and we think ourſelves in danger of loſing, in the ſplendour of the "rights of the "church," all natural ſenſe of right and wrong.

If our courts of law, after a plaintiff had recovered judgment for a juſt debt, were to arreſt the judgment,

judgment, under pretence that the plaintiff would miſemploy his money; as for inſtance, in purchaſing "grains of gunpowder" at Birmingham; all would be horror and diſmay: Why? Becauſe in courts of law we puniſh for crimes *committed*, not for pretended ſuſpicions of what *may be* done. We there conſtantly expect, and as conſtantly find, reaſon and juſtice, directed by common ſenſe; but in the law of *holy church*, we have been ſo long accuſtomed to myſtery and iniquity, that we ceaſe to be ſhocked: Yet (p. 221) "hiſtory will teach poſterity, not to "make war, either upon religion, or philoſophy, "for the abuſe, which hypocrites of both have "made, of the two moſt valuable bleſſings conferred "upon us by the Patron of men." And "though "(p. 136) you think it a misfortune to the age, "that every thing is to be diſcuſſed," meaning I ſuppoſe, that nothing ſhould be ſaid but on one ſide, I thought it right, after reading what the clergy, (whoſe character is pourtrayed in your pamphlet, p. 220) of Cheſhire, Yorkſhire, Blewitt's Buildings, &c. had written and publiſhed, to draw up ſome reſolutions, as principles, by way of anſwer; and in contradiction to ſuch of them as required or deſerved it; to which I ſhould, probably, have added ſomething like the ſecond and third before ſtated, if ever publiſhed; and I intended, if the Diſſenters of the county where I reſide had afterwards met to publiſh reſolutions for themſelves, to have recommended thoſe to them; but that event never happened, and I never had opportunity, or ſufficient conſequence, to publiſh any. I ſhall, however, give you a copy of them, as I have de-

determined

termined to have no eſoteric doctrines; you ſhall know all our principles, which are indeed the only ſecrets we have that our enemies will not make known; for if our real principles were known, their miſrepreſentations could not ſtand, and by thus openly ſtating them, church champions need not fight with ghoſts, as ſome of them have pretended they were forced to do, becauſe we refuſed to make them known.

'I. That Proteſtant Diſſenters, as ſuch, are ſufficiently known to hold no principles unfriendly to the civil conſtitution of the kingdom, or to any of the natural or civil rights of their fellow-ſubjects, of any denomination.'

'II. That in our opinion, acts of legiſlation originating in revenge, or tending to the deſtruction, oppreſſion, or *degradation* of one body * of ſubjects (if innocent) though the *minority*, merely for the gratification, emolument, or pleaſure of another body of ſubjects, though a *part* of the *majority*, are acts of *power* and not of *right*, and are contrary to the true and proper end of all legitimate government, which intends the *equal* good and protection of *all*; which acts, by exciting diſcontent, and, in the end, reſiſtance, tend to the diſturbance, if not the deſtruction of order and peace.

* "The ordaining of laws in favour of *one* part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppreſſion of *another*, is certainly the moſt erroneous and miſtaken policy. An *equal* diſpenſation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages, is what every part is entitled to, and ought to enjoy." Dr. Franklin's Tracts, p. 375.

'III. That

'III. That acts of parliament, creating penalties and diſabilities for merely religious opinions, are acts of *power* and not of *right*, and have moſtly originated in barbariſm and ignorance, or a contempt of the *natural* and *civil rights of men*, but have ſometimes been the price of corruption, and participation in abuſe, which acts, while in execution, are in our opinion, a diſgrace to the age, to the ſtatute-book, and the nation.

'IV. That the Corporation and Teſt Acts, if defenſible when made, were only paſſed on the ſpur of the occaſion, and on a then alleged ſtate neceſſity; and as no ſuch neceſſity, or ſhadow of neceſſity now remains, they become impolitic, and unjuſt, in diſcriminating between equally good ſubjects, and in ſtigmatizing Proteſtant Diſſenters as unworthy of truſt under a government they have uniformly ſupported, and whoſe burthens they have equally borne; and as the Teſt impoſed by thoſe acts, is in our opinion, irreligious, in prophaning a ſacred ordinance; and worſe than nugatory, in that it operates only on the conſcientious; we can but deſire their repeal.

'V. That for theſe reaſons we reſolve, in the moſt dutiful and reſpectful manner, unremittingly to perſevere, in our application to the legiſlature of our country, by ſuch peaceable and conſtitutional ways as may be thought beſt, for the repeal of thoſe acts: conſcious, that as we have always hitherto diſcharged the duties of good citizens, we may reaſonably

reaſonably hope by a perſeverance in the ſame conduct, to be reinſtated by a juſt and enlightened legiſlature (at ſome future day, and we truſt not far diſtant) to the ſame irreproachable and eligible ſituation, in all reſpects, as the reſt of our fellow ſubjects; and we neither aſk or deſire any other.'

One of your coadjutors, Sir, on this queſtion of our *rights*, pretends, that we Diſſenters have *no right* to be reſtored to an eligibility; "becauſe," he ſays, "rights muſt be *natural*, or *conventional*; the "latter are acquired by *compact* only. The right "to the powers of magiſtracy is founded on a com-"pact between the magiſtrate, and the *people*, or "the *majority of the people*; and the right cannot "exiſt prior to the contract. No man can hold "ſuch an office only by a contract *de facto*, or the "ſuppoſition of it, but no ſuch ſuppoſition exiſts, "when the law, *the voice of the people*, declares the "contrary. This is the foundation of all freedom "in government, when the *people* have declared, "by the voices of perſons properly authorized by "them, that they will not enter into ſuch com-"pacts, with PERSONS OF A CERTAIN "DESCRIPTION (an act *which it will not be* "*diſputed*, but they are fully competent to,) they "can be in poſſeſſion of no right to office, with-"out a contradiction to theſe principles; and as "there exiſts no *natural rights* to a civil office, the "Diſſenters cannot ſay, that by the Teſt Act, they "are deprived of ſuch right." Here, Sir, the church and Diſſenters are put *fairly* at iſſue: Some-

thing

thing like an anſwer may be ſuggeſted by what happened to me yeſterday: I went with a client ſeveral miles to pay ſome family legacies; it is uſual in the country, for thoſe who take money to treat, as it is called; we expected the uſual fare, but as there was only *one* who *paid* money, and *ſeveral* who *received* it, they were diſpoſed to adopt this gentleman's principle, of making a *compact* for the houſe-expences, and determining by a vote of the majority. Your friend ſays, "it will not be diſputed but the "*people*, or the *majority of the people*, have a right to "make compacts, as the foundation of all free-"dom depends upon it;" but as the exiſtence of *good ſubſtantial natural juſtice*, prior to all compacts, makes no part of your friend's preliminaries, ſo I foreſaw in my company no *juſtice* was intended; for the majority were *intereſted in injuſtice*, and *ſo corrupted:* of courſe all that took money voted, that my client who paid it, *ſhould* alſo *pay their reckoning*; not becauſe it was *juſt*, or cuſtomary, or any thing like it, but becauſe they were the *majority*; that is, it was *the law of the ſtrongeſt*. In this caſe, as I had neither "*gallies*," nor *whipping-houſe* to fear, I choſe not to ſubmit to it: in your coadjutor's caſe I have *other motives* than a ſenſe of juſtice to make me ſubmit. You, Sir, (p. 309) "may wiſh me joy of my "happy poſition, without my having got the wolf "by the ears;" but you will allow me to ſay, I have not choſen to place myſelf in it. I do not approve it, nor do I think *power* determines *right*; becauſe I think this would juſtify highwaymen. Deſire your friends then, Sir, to find a better argument

ment for keeping "*the Teſt Acts in force*," or elſe have the juſtice or magnanimity to give it up. Junius ſays, "it is unhappy when we can neither do "wrong without ruin, nor right without affliction."

But permit me, Sir, to illuſtrate this deluſive, this pernicious maxim of *power* determining *right*, by a ſimile that may be thought, more ad rem: ſuppoſe the city, as Hobbes calls it, to have two thouſand free-men in it, the majority, twelve hundred for inſtance, make a law, or *compact* if you pleaſe, which ſubjects eight hundred to plunder; this minority, feeling the injuſtice and inequality of the law, and thinking themſelves aggrieved, petition the majority, or if you pleaſe their *repreſentatives*; as that is a more likely way of being *patiently* heard, though *not an infallible* way of obtaining *juſtice*: the majority, in their different guilds, reſolve, that being the *majority* they have a right to *compact*, and that they will enter into *no compact with perſons of a certain deſcription*; from petitioning, the minority proceed to remonſtrance, and ſo on; till for libels, or reſiſtance, they are all baniſhed or hanged. The city, now unanimous, ſoon come at a new queſtion; their prieſts, grown proud by conqueſts, complain that the altars of their gods are neglected; and out comes a law from the majority for uniformity in religion; that "whoſoever, when "he hears the voice of the dulcimer, &c. ſhall re-"fuſe to fall down and worſhip the golden image "which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath ſet up, ſhall "be caſt into the burning fiery furnace;" that is,

"ſhall

" ſhall be delivered to the ſecular arm to be burned " as heretics." Again, here is a *minority*, who are ever unfortunate, and *always in the wrong*; they *diſſent* from this national worſhip eſtabliſhed by law, and are " puniſhed with pain of death by burning, " without benefit of clergy:" The majority of courſe, are again all unanimous, and very happy; and being reduced from two thouſand to ſeven hundred, according to the old maxim, " the fewer " the better chear," have plenty of houſes to let, and only want tenants to take them. In a courſe of time new queſtions ariſe, new compacts are made; new minorities are diſtinguiſhed, or a *certain deſcription of perſons with whom the majority will not compact*, and who of courſe, have *no civil rights*, as they depend on conventions; and from being thus diſtinguiſhed, they are endangered, and come at length to be deſtroyed: This proceſs goes on till at laſt, two determine ſome queſtion againſt one, when all compacts *end*; as there can be no majority between two, of courſe the law of Cain, the ſtrongeſt, can now only come in conteſt; the conqueror in this laſt conteſt ſucceeds to the throne, and the mitre; and having now no rebel, or *Diſſenter*, he muſt be as happy as deſpotiſm and intolerance can make him. Thus much for compacts by majorities, without ſome preliminary ſuppoſition of *juſtice* as the foundation. I wiſh this ſuppoſition might end all pretences of compacts, from one ſect as the majority, againſt another ſect as the minority, unleſs it can be proved the compact is founded in *reaſon* and *juſtice*, or at leaſt in a *fair ſtate neceſſity*, which

which to honeſt citizens may authorize (p. 199) "the ſtatues of equity and mercy to be veiled for a "moment."

It is, I think, in vain to deny the application of this ſuppoſition to the Teſt Act; allow but the principle and the reſt follows, only in a leſs degree; it is, reſorting to a certain writer's Origin of Government, "hiring one part of the ſociety, to force the other into ſubjection;" but we, Sir, are not ſo weak as to believe the intolerant part of your prieſts want argument; they know well enough what is right, and what ought to be done, but it is a mere queſtion of intereſt; and how to keep the common people from ſeeing, by throwing duſt in their eyes, is the only conſideration with them; and abuſe is more intelligible to a mob than good ſenſe. As an individual, I can but view theſe intolerant men, as I ſuppoſe the thinking, or (if you pleaſe) the "en-"lightened," part of the Babylonians did the magicians, ſoothſayers, and aſtrologers of their times, as kept to adorn a court, or to impoſe on a "vulgar "and unenlightened" populace; at the ſame time, I am very far from conſidering the whole order in this light; I rejoice to believe there are many very excellent exceptions, ſome of whom I know, and highly honour. On the morning I returned from town, after Mr. Fox's motion, as I was going to the diligence, I ſaw two clergymen getting in to the carriage, who were of courſe to be my companions for the journey; my feelings had ſcarcely ſubſided, and I felt no very agreeable ſenſations at ſeeing

them, expecting to hear my friends and my principles abuſed all the way home; to my great ſurprize, and no leſs pleaſure, I ſoon heard one mention to the other, with evident diſapprobation, an intolerant catechiſm which had been printed for the uſe of the children at ſome Sunday ſchool, which taught the children to diſlike *heretics*; this proof of liberality in my fellow travellers delivered me from my former apprehenſions, and as we became better acquainted, I was exceedingly pleaſed, and much gratified to hear that many of their friends were equally inclined with themſelves to civil and *religious* liberty; and they expreſſed a very earneſt hope, that the Diſſenters would not be diſheartened at their late defeat, but would perſevere in their application to the legiſlature till the Teſt Acts were repealed; as they ſaid, the only hope of reformation in this country muſt ariſe from the Diſſenters.

You are pleaſed to ſay (p. 219) "you hope the "partizans of the French in England, will ſucceed "neither in the *pillage* of the eccleſiaſtics, nor in the "introduction of popular election of biſhops, or "cures, as it will be the laſt corruption of the "church, and the utter ruin of the clerical cha-"racter."—I never heard, Sir, that the "clan" of "enlightened" Diſſenters were remarkable for *pilfering*, nor do I ſuppoſe, if eccleſiaſtics are reformed, that Diſſenters would be employed in the "*pillage*" any more than in reviſing the church's articles, where you want no "atheiſts" (p. 134); though I muſt confeſs, I do not ſee how *the church of Chriſt*,

"the

" the congregation of faithful men," would be corrupted by a reform; to be ſure you and I, Sir, have not, always hitherto, jumpt together in our ſentiments; but then, as one of the leſs enquiring, " I " am doomed by providence," and you ſay (p. 145) " I need not be aſhamed to rely on the ſentiments " of yourſelf, and others; not the leaſt learned and " reflecting part of the kingdom;" who with your ſuperior learning, (I muſt not ſay " light") are pleaſed to repreſent an elective clergy, as " ſuch an " arrangement (p. 216) as will drive out of the " clerical profeſſion, all men of ſobriety, and throw " the whole *direction of the public mind*," into the " hands of " a ſet of licentious, bold, crafty, factious, " flattering wretches," with nothing aſcertained as to doctrine or morals; " and that the higher, and the " lower, may preach, or practiſe, any mode of reli- " gion or irreligion, that they pleaſe." I preſume this lamentation over the departure of learning, morals and decency, had more than a look " aſkance" at us Diſſenters, as if neither the one nor the other, remained with us: as it is known to all, that the whole of our miniſters are elective, it ſtrongly inſinuates your opinion, of the ſtate of learning, and morals, among us; but ſo incorrigibly perverſe are ſectaries, that I dare ſay, we in general are aſhamed of neither the learning, the morals, nor the decency, of our miniſters; we do not find them " a ſet of licentious, bold, crafty, factious, flattering " wretches;" nor are they guilty of low, and illiberal intrigue; not that we pretend to have none but learned miniſters, we boaſt only of their morals.

The learning of our miniſters, in general, bears ſome tolerable proportion to their congregations; and if ſome very poor, and illiterate people, chuſe a miniſter, uneducated, but of good morals, and good natural ſenſe, we ſee nothing to lament; he is equal to his undertaking, and in general ſuch miniſters are uſeful characters in their places; they are not called to preach at viſitations to biſhops, nor in palaces to kings; and if none chuſe to hear them, they have one advantage however, they have nothing to pay; nor have our miniſters any ſpiritual courts to worry their people in for non-attendance; where therefore is the harm if we have ſuch miniſters? But we inſiſt, we have no deficiency of learned miniſters among us, and we ſuffer no immoral ones. The royal ſociety is a teſtimony to the peculiar (217) "literature, ſcience, or erudi-"tion" of ſeveral of our miniſters; though it ſeems, by a late inſtance, as if a proſcription was gone forth againſt us there too; of courſe I appeal to this teſtimony, at the only time it is likely to be practicable; Dr. Prieſtley, Dr. Price, Dr. Kippis, and Dr. Rees, with many others I could name, need fear no competitors from your church, though many hundred thouſands a year are expended in rearing a few gimcracks to race againſt them. This is an idea much dwelt on by the amiable Mr. archdeacon Paley, one of your *very beſt* advocates for the ſeparate order, and the immenſity of the church revenue: But we have no electioneering, Sir, among our miniſters, though they are all elective; the leaſt attempt at a canvas would be an effectual

effectual bar to his election for ever. Diſſenters therefore, Sir, have for more than a century, abſolutely *lived down* your imaginary horrors.

As you ſeem totally unacquainted with our mode, and as I am in the habit of communicating our "in-"door" doctrines to you, I will inform you of more particulars than I at firſt thought could be neceſſary. I will give you an account of the laſt inſtance that has happened, within my knowledge, of the election of a diſſenting miniſter; which I think will give you more juſt ideas on the ſubject than you ſeem to poſſeſs. A congregation of Diſſenters that I know very well, conſiſting of at leaſt three or four hundred, lately loſt their miniſter; the people met as uſual on the firſt Lord's-day after, when the members of the church (the communicants) and the ſubſcribers, appointed a committee from each deſcription; that is, three for the church, and three for the ſubſcribers; to act with their deacons, in providing ſupplies of miniſters till they found one they approved: Their deacons, I ſhould firſt inform you, Sir, are nothing more than perſons appointed by the free choice of the communicants, to tranſact their general buſineſs; ſuch as receiving their collections, and relieving their poor; no one of which I ever knew them diſcard if they maintained a proper character. This committee, thus appointed, applied each among their reſpective connections, for information about any diſſenting miniſter at liberty, or inclining to remove, whoſe character for good diſpoſition, natural and acquired abilities, and

piety, they could recommend. After a few weeks one was heard of, whoſe character anſwered the inquiry, and on ſuch recommendation he was invited for one month on trial; at the end of that month, the communicants, and ſubſcribers, were invited to attend a general meeting at the meeting-houſe, to conſider whether the gentleman ſhould be invited any further, or not; and after every perſon was heard who choſe to ſay any thing, they paſſed an unanimous vote for a further invitation; and at their requeſt, their chairman wrote the miniſter this letter, of which I am able to give you a copy.

"Dear Sir,

"The church at ——— of which the "late Mr. ———, was paſtor, having had the "pleaſure of your labour and inſtruction for the "paſt month, have this day (with the ſubſcribers in "the congregation) come to an unanimous vote, to "invite you to come and reſide among them, as "their teacher, for ſix months, with a view to your "future ſettlement among them. The church has "no doctrinal covenant, or any other bond of "union than chriſtian love and virtue; and having "been well inſtructed, by their late excellent paſtor, "in freedom of enquiry, and (as they think) the "true principles of chriſtian liberty, they mean not "to be brought under a yoke of bondage to any "man. This liberty, which they claim for them-"ſelves, they chearfully allow to others, and eſpe-"cially to their paſtor. If therefore, Sir, a church, "thus conſtituted, meets your approbation, and

"you

"you ſhould think it in the power of the church,
" and congregation, to make your ſituation among
" them agreeable, and happy to yourſelf, they are
" ſo well ſatisfied with your *abilities*, *diſpoſition*, and
" *piety*, as to give you this, their moſt ſincere and
" cordial invitation. In the hope of your ſpeedy
" anſwer, I ſubſcribe myſelf, at the general requeſt
" of the meeting, Sir,

" Your affectionate friend and brother,

" —— *October*, 1790. —— Chairman."

I am thus very particular in giving you this account, intending it ſhould prove to thoſe who chuſe to ſee, that an elective clergy is not attended with any ſuch dangerous, or contemptible conſequences as you forebode, either as to learning or religion. Indeed it ſeems a monſtrous reflection, on the virtue, and good ſenſe, of both clergy and people, as well as on the truth, and purity of chriſtianity itſelf, to ſuppoſe, if primitive chriſtianity were reſtored, both preacher and people, would be all knaves and fools; when, on the contrary, we ſectaries all think, it would reſtore truth and virtue, by deſtroying the temptation for knaves to profeſs, what they do not believe.

A very ſenſible, but no very benevolent writer, on the origin of evil, one of your own party, ſaid to be the late Mr. Soame Jenyns, ſays, " the mo-
" ment any religion becomes national, or eſtabliſhed,
" its purity muſt certainly be loſt, becauſe it is then
" impoſſible to keep it unconnected with men's

" intereſts; and if connected, it muſt inevitably be
" perverted by them. Whenever temporal advan-
" tages are annexed to any religious profeſſion, they
" will be ſure to call in all thoſe who have no re-
" ligion at all: *Knaves* will embrace it for the ſake
" of intereſt; *fools* will follow them for the ſake of
" faſhion; and when once it is in ſuch hands, om-
" nipotence itſelf can never preſerve its purity.
" The very *order of men* who are maintained to ſup-
" port its intereſt, will ſacrifice them to their *own*;
" and being in the ſole poſſeſſion of all its promiſes,
" and all its terrors, and having the tenderneſs of
" childhood, the weakneſs of age, and the *ignorance*
" *of the vulgar*, to work upon; I ſay theſe men,
" veſted with all theſe powers, yet being but men,
" will not fail to convert all the mighty influence
" they muſt derive from them, to the *ſelfiſh ends* of
" their *own* avarice and ambition, and conſequently,
" to the total deſtruction of its original purity: from
" it, they will lay claim to powers which it never
" deſigned them, and to *poſſeſſions* to which they have
" no *right*; to make good their falſe pretenſions,
" falſe hiſtories will be forged, and fabulous tradi-
" tions invented; groundleſs terrors will be flung
" out, to operate on ſuperſtition and timidity;
" creeds and articles will be contrived to confound
" all reaſon; and *teſts* impoſed, to *ſift out* all who
" have *honeſty*, or courage enough, to reſiſt theſe
" unwarrantable encroachments. Devotion will
" be turned into farce and pageantry, to captivate
" men's eyes, that their pockets may with more fa-
" cility be invaded: they will convert piety into
" ſuperſtition,

" ſuperſtition; *zeal* into *rancour*; and this religion " notwithſtanding its divinity, into diabolical male- " volence. By degrees, *knaves* will *join* them, *fools* " *believe* them, and *cowards* be *AFRAID* of them; " and having gained ſo conſiderable a part of the " world to their intereſts, they will erect an inde- " pendant dominion among themſelves, *dangerous* " *to the liberties of mankind*; and repreſenting all " thoſe who oppoſe their tyranny, as God's ene- " mies, teach it to be meritorious in his ſight, to " perſecute them in this world, and damn them " in the next." Now, without availing myſelf of this gentleman's authority, on which to build any charges againſt your favourite church, I ſhall quit him and proceed in my own defence.

A plain moral man would think it a wicked ſlander in any man, while he receives his wages, to traduce his paymaſter; yet many of your clergy from their pulpits, perpetually do this in the caſe of us Diſſenters, and that too in their abſence; a way not reckoned very manly by men of the world; but this part of the ſacred order conſider, that they have priviliges of their own, and of courſe their morality muſt not be tried, by the rules of common men: We "plain men" ſhould think it no great proof of chriſtian charity to uſe any means, direct, or indirect, to ſet one neighbour againſt another for no aſſigned or poſſible reaſon, but that a Diſſenter does not like the epiſcopal hierarchy, called the eſtabliſhed church. What then? he pays to it, and (as many of the clergy confeſs) with leſs trouble to themſelves,

themſelves, than many in their own flocks; while therefore the clergy receive the Diſſenters pay, they ſhould not be countenanced in abuſing their paymaſters; yet let any man read ſome of their charges and ſermons at viſitations, &c. which are voted to be printed, and are diſperſed with an avidity unaccountable to any thing but malignant zeal; and he muſt be blind not to ſee we Diſſenters are mere buts for them.—You, Sir, call for a truce from polemicks at leaſt one day in the week; but, alas! to us Diſſenters "no truce, no peace returns, "morning, nor noon, nor night:" think with the wiſe, and act with the vulgar; admit the articles in any of the thirteen ſenſes, (for uniformity of opinion is not now pretended to) and "all ſhall be thine:" what a price for hypocriſy!—Had you, Sir, been as impartial as you pretend to be, (p. 356) you would have marked the perverſion of the proper buſineſs in theſe ſtate ſervants, ſent by you "chriſ-"tian ſtateſman (p. 151) to preach the goſpel to "the multitude" of the poor; for we Diſſenters find, their goſpel is not a goſpel of peace to us, but a ſword. If mere diſlike of the epiſcopal hierarchy is a juſt ground of excluſion from civil employments; a fortiori, a diſlike of any part of the *civil* conſtitution ought to be ſo, particularly the army, the navy, or the repreſentation, and then we might have ſufficient Teſts to exclude every honeſt man from any ſhare in the government of his own country. I expect few will ſuppoſe the army, the navy, or our repreſentation, are not to the full as important *parts of the ſtate* as the *clergy*, who call themſelves

themſelves *the church*; and Teſts would be as juſt for one as the other. The arguments would be to the full as concluſive; only, in my own opinion, they would appear to be on far more important ſubjects than the preſent Teſt Laws; and of courſe the Teſts might be more generally adhered to if eſtabliſhed by long cuſtom; but then, we Diſſenters ſhould have a more generous adverſary to contend with, if we applied for a repeal of them, as they would be laymen; but the prieſts in paſt ages of ignorance, have had ſufficient art to make their own religious tenets of importance. Surely every man ſhould have his own religions opinions, which are of no importance to any but himſelf; if he *acts* well, let him be commended; if ill, let the magiſtrate puniſh him, and never enquire what his religious tenets are. There ſhould be no ſuch thing as "*Shew me the man, and I'll tell you the law*; that's a dangerous maxim any where.

No reaſonable man, or good citizen, can think the Diſſenters unjuſtifiable in applying to the legiſlature for a repeal of the Teſt Act, becauſe they think it a grievance; and they ſeek a reform from the only place where, by good citizens, it ought to be looked for; they think they have a *right* to equal liberty and eligibility with other ſubjects, paying the ſame taxes, and having as much intereſt, pro tanto, in thoſe very places, as other ſubjects; and you, Sir, admit your countrymen (p. 354) "are "not without ſome cauſe of apprehenſion and com-"plaint:" the *time* of their application could not be objectionable,

objectionable, as they applied in the very ſame way two years before the French Revolution broke out, or was foreſeen: the *manner* of the application was perfectly peaceable and conſtitutional; and as to their general meetings in the country, they became neceſſary from the miniſter's declaring in the Houſe on their former application, he did not know the Diſſenters themſelves wiſhed a repeal, as he ſaw no petitions: *their meetings* were all quiet and peaceable, without one exception; and their Reſolutions were paſſed expreſsly to make known their approbation of the London committee's application.

In the name of common ſenſe and common honeſty, if neither the *matter*, the *manner*, nor the *time* were exceptionable, what have reaſonable and good men to object to us? Your prieſts who educate you, have given you an unfavourable opinion of us; and, as a pleaſing writer ſays, "We have "always to root up *prejudice* before we can plant "an *affection*;" the faſhion of the court has beſide ſtampt the public taſte, and of courſe the church is in faſhion.

A monaſtic education is not, in my opinion, very favourable to a magiſtrate in a free country:—Eccleſiaſtics ſeldom give any ſtrong bias towards liberty.—This country has great reaſon to rejoice in the open, manly, education of a great perſonage: the free mixture with the world, and with men of the firſt ſenſe in it, are a ten-fold amends to the community for a few thouſand pounds, while we can

ſpend

ſpend millions in temporary pacifications, and bribing corrupt boroughs.

I do not know whether the committee of Diſſenters, now increaſed and much ſtrengthened by the unanimous ſupport and confidence of the country Diſſenters, will think it proper to wait longer for the cooling of the "public mind," after being heated in your "alembic," and by your coadjutors; or will ſoon apply again to any branch of the legiſlative, for a repeal of the *Teſt Laws, and penal ſtatutes in matters of religion*; I have an entire confidence in the good ſenſe, prudence, and virtue of that body, and leave to their better judgment, *how* and *when* to act; only hoping, if we ſhould ſee a change of miniſtry, that the Diſſenters will have the generoſity not to apply for the firſt year or two; as that would only furniſh our enemies with a ground of oppoſition to them, in pretended fears for the church's ſafety. I had deſigned to have ſtated my opinion of the form of a petition, and a mode of application, but I feel infinitely more happy in leaving the whole to our committee. I ſcarcely believe they will think a vote of the former houſe of commons, given apparently under a panic, a decided ground of acquieſcence; yet from the too prevalent diſpoſition to keep all things as they are, their ſucceſſors may be equally diſpoſed to ſhew an equally decided mind, under the impreſſion, Sir, of your Reflections; eſpecially if they imagined, ſuch an appearance would prevent future applications; but I preſume the Diſſenters in general, are of

"more

" more ſteady and perſevering natures," than to yield up what is juſt and right, to mere abuſe and menace; and I can but think you, Sir, and other gentlemen, will grow tired of ſo ſilly a conteſt about nothing on your part; it is pelting of frogs, which indeed is death to us, and ſport to you; but as the prieſts are your tools, you will, by and by, drive the intolerant part of them into their cloiſters, " from the buſy haunts of men," till they learn the common feelings of men, and the manners of gentlemen; you have learning enough, without the leading ſtrings of theſe pedants, to preſerve the ſpirit both of a gentleman, and of religion, thoſe two good things on which you ſay (p. 117) " de-" pends the ſtate of Europe."

I remember hearing lord John Cavendiſh once, in the houſe of commons, when your excellent reform bill was in agitation; (and, however unjuſtly you may treat me, or my principles, you ſhall ever have my ſincere praiſe for your paſt patriotiſm; " no " one ſhall prevent me from being juſt or grate-" ful;") when thoſe who oppoſed the bill made objections, he anſwered, that the power of the crown, was a truſt for the benefit of the people; and the guardians of the people ought not to ſuffer that power, which was intended for their benefit, to be perverted, and employed in their deſtruction; which was imminently the caſe when the crown uſed its prerogative to influence, and corrupt, the members of that houſe. As lord John is not there now (much to the country's loſs, but thanks to your

your coalition for it) you will permit me to ſay after him, that I think, the church's power, if it ought to have any, is as much a truſt for the people's benefit, as the power of the crown, and ought as much to be prevented from being employed to the people's prejudice; and the Diſſenters are a part of the people. *We* believe the church's wealth was originally obtained, by the frauds of popiſh prieſts, from the miſtaken piety, and ignorance, of our anceſtors; and, by the by, perhaps a part was obtained from our own anceſtors literally; and yet we are excluded, very unjuſtly I think, by ſubſcriptions, and bona fide delarations, from any ſhare in it, even at the univerſities. At the reformation the parliament transferred this immenſe wealth, from a popiſh to a proteſtant prieſthood, and for far different purpoſes; inſtead of ſaying maſſes and prayers for the ſouls of the dead, for which it was moſtly given, the parliament declared, the maſs, and many other rites in the popiſh church, to be ſuperſtitious, and aboliſhed them; of courſe the eſtates were transferred to different perſons, and for different uſes, though too probably they were given to the clergy of the day, to ſtop their mouths, as they have always in days of groſs ignorance, and conſequently of ſuperſtition, had wonderful influence over the "vulgar and uninformed" mob; and a ſop to cerberus has often been found a neceſſary paſſport to the elyſium of peace; but we live in better times, and chuſe to ſuppoſe theſe enormous revenues of the church ought not to enable the poſſeſſors to become our troubleſome maſters, and dictators; and

if

if the legiſlature ſhould ſee good to alter any laws, made in *worſe times*, by leſs "*enlightened*" men; (mind, Sir, "*enlightened*" in my dictionary does not mean "*atheiſm*," but unprejudiced, improved common ſenſe;) I ſee "nothing violently to condemn," in ſuch liberal conduct, though I remember one of the good biſhops mentioned in the houſe of lords, that he thought the Grecian law ſhould be adopted here, of obliging any perſon, who propoſed in the ſenate the alteration of any law already eſtabliſhed, to make the propoſal with a halter about his neck, that if it was not adopted he might inſtantly be hanged: this ſeems as good a way to prevent reforms, as the czar Peter took to prevent appeals; he allowed all his good ſubjects to appeal to him, but ordained if any appealed falſely, the appellant ſhould be put to death; of courſe few choſe the riſk. I did not think it very conſiſtent with the dignity of the laſt parliament, to ſuffer the clergy to interfere in their deliberations; as the queſtion was a queſtion of *ſtate* policy and juſtice, and not of *church* power; nor is it very parliamentary to allow one ſet of men to oppoſe the relief of another, unleſs that relief oppreſſes them which the clergy cannot pretend to.

I remember in the year 1773, when our diſſenting miniſters petitioned the houſe of commons, for relief in the matter of ſubſcription to the thirty-nine articles, which the houſe thought reaſonable to grant, as ous miniſters received none of the church revenues; ſome miniſters and other Diſſenters, either

either from extreme narrowneſs of mind, or poſſibly from being bought by our adverſaries, in hopes of creating a diviſion among ourſelves; or more probably from being gulled by ſome of the awakened among the ſacred order (ſuch as I ſuſpect occaſioned infinite injury to our reputation, through infatuated men at Colcheſter) on the day after the bill for giving relief was ordered to be printed, preſented a counter-petition to the houſe, in which they ſay, "they are well ſatisfied with the preſent "mode of qualification, from a conviction in their "conſciences, that the church articles are true and "important; and that by altering the law it would "ſet aſide thoſe eſſential doctrines of the reforma-"tion, and occaſion animoſities between brethren, "and *weaken that pleaſing* UNION *which happily* "*ſubſiſted* between the eſtabliſhed church, and thoſe "that diſſent from it;" and therefore prayed to be heard by counſel againſt the bill: the houſe in its juſtice and goodneſs received the petition, and appointed a day to hear counſel as prayed; but none ever appeared. A member at the time (I think Sir Charles Turner) ſaid, this petition appeared to him as unreaſonable, as for the people of Middleſex to petition the houſe againſt a turnpike road in Yorkſhire; what is it to them? If theſe gentlemen like the articles they are not hindered from ſigning them; but why compel them that do not? So relieving Diſſenters from the Sacramental Teſt does not hinder thoſe from taking the ſacrament that like it; the laſt parliament actually ſuffered themſelves to be beſieged, in no very decent manner, by their own

creatures (ſome of the clergy) until part of the country was on tip-toe with expectation, about what if granted, would have appeared like the mountain in labour, a mere mouſe; for ſuch would be the repeal of thoſe acts, if the enmity and malignity of ſo many of the clergy, againſt Diſſenters, did not put them on making it ſo mighty a matter; yet I think they certainly will be repealed, as ſoon as the deluſion is over; but which at preſent is zealouſly kept up by ſome of the clergy, and by your pamphlet; as though we Diſſenters were deſtitute of common prudence, a banditti of furious fanaticks, or mere beggars; who having nothing to loſe, were in reality, what we are ſometimes called, a ſet of "levellers:" on the other hand, when the humour of our enemies ſuit, we are too ſhy, and cloſe fiſted; in fact, whether we drink at the ſtream above the wolf, or below him, we are in the condition of the poor ſheep, we mud the water, and the wolf cannot drink, and we are threatened to be devoured. I am myſelf a ſmall creditor of the nation, of courſe have but a ſhort beard for (p. 156) "a jew in change "alley;" yet ſome of us Diſſenters are as much beyond you, or many of your coadjutors, Sir, in public property, as you or they exceed me; and I ſhould have ſuppoſed, our property in the ſtate would have been conſidered by reaſonable men, as a ſufficient ſtake for our love of order. If a levelling ſcheme is agitated I ſuſpect we have little chance of getting higher; perhaps, therefore, Sir, by conſidering this, and believing we have ſome prudence (for we are generally allowed to be ſober men

men at leaſt) you may in future have leſs uneaſineſs about us, and our "partizans;" and we Diſſenters may conſole ourſelves under our preſent unmerited obloquy, as arriving at the confines of a better ſtate of things; for by and by incendiaries will not be believed.

The lying ſpirit which poſſeſſed ſome of the archdeaconries extended ſo far, and deſcended ſo low among clergy, that at a late county election the the candidate (who proved ſucceſsful) during his canvaſs, requeſted a farmer to go to a neighbouring pariſh, and canvaſs the freeholders for him; he did ſo, and the people were in general much pleaſed with the proſpect of having ſuch a member, as he was known to be an *active*, *able*, *upright*, and *acceſſible* magiſtrate; when lo! the next day a moſt unfortunate diſcovery was made to them by the curate, that the candidate was a Diſſenter; and if they ſucceeded, he aſſured them, the Diſſenters would certainly pull down their ſteeple: This ſome of the freeholders told me a day or two after, and as they knew the ſpiritual court would oblige them to build it up again, they certainly were not inclined to have it pulled down, as the church rates would ruin them all: This is one of the bleſſed effects (to us Diſſenters at leaſt) of a reſident curate, if he can do no good, he can at leaſt do miſchief; if he hunts and ſhoots with the ſquire, or kills his game without his leave; which often happens (and of which I have had grievous complaints;) he can ſet his neighbours againſt Diſſenters, which is a

ſufficient atonement among ſome of his order for all venal ſins. This ſly inſinuation againſt the worthy candidate, could not be done away among ſome of the freeholders, till ſome conſiderable churchmen took the pains to undeceive them; for in truth the candidate was a *whig*, and of courſe the high church were full cry againſt him, though I dare ſay he never was at a meeting-houſe in his life. This art was not confined to that pariſh, for on the day of election a clergyman leaped upon the huſtings and addreſſed the freeholders, endeavouring to infuſe a like kind of ſuſpicion into their minds; alledging the diſpute did not lie between *Pitt* and *Fox*, who ſhould be miniſter; but whether the church ſhould be *pulled down*, and Diſſenters *put uppermoſt*. This "language in the *patois* of fraud (p. 155) the "cant and gibberiſh of hypocriſy," did not ſucceed, the fraud had been expoſed before, and no panic could be ſtruck in the lower freeholders; on the contrary, the people in general, even the loweſt cried out, no prieſts, no prieſts, down with him; and he was compelled to deſiſt; but though the trick miſcarried, even you, Sir, muſt admit (as it was againſt your particular friend) that the attempt was as baſe, as it was wicked; but in time the mob will know better, and will come to eſteem ſuch prieſts, in the manner they now do witches, as mere cheats; objects of abhorrence or mirth, as they happen to be in the humour. Our new houſe of commons will, I hope, ſet an example, by diſregarding their pretended alarms, and diſcountenancing the clergy's interfering out of their proper ſphere;

ſphere; for prieſts are bad politicians: and as you ſay, Sir, "thoſe who quit their proper character to "aſſume what does not belong to them, are for the "greateſt part ignorant, both of the character they "leave and of the character they aſſume." Many of the clergy ſince the Diſſenters application have been uncommonly civil to the friends called quakers, with the manifeſt hope of getting them to take part with the church againſt Diſſenters; but the quakers are too wiſe to be cheated; they remember the church has long teeth, the Diſſenters none; they know therefore whom they ought to fear. The clergy in their publications now call the quakers, a peaceable and wiſe ſect; and ſay, they deſerve the protection and kindneſs of government. If theſe encomiaſts are ſincere, why do they not in this day of their great power uſe their irreſiſtable influence with the miniſter, to bring a bill into parliament, to make the affirmation of a quaker equal to an oath in criminal, as well as civil caſes? This would be, indeed, ſhewing them a favour, and which every body knows they deſerve, as for want of it they are to delivered over to be plundered, and murdered by a banditti, who feel their impunity in the amiable virtue, and ſtrong principle of this people, and adhering literally to the words of ſcripture, "ſwear not at all." No man that conſiders, will feel himſelf unſafe in this allowance of their affirmation in criminal caſes; and any honeſt man who knows the ſect, will acknowledge they deſerve it, but no! no alterations! no innovations! at leaſt, no good ones. We have, however, ſome

bad ones. The principle of taxation is altered from *univerſal* to *partial*, and taxes themſelves taken from *luxuries* and laid on *neceſſaries*, under a pretence too of a *commutation* for what we need not buy. We have new modes of trial of foreign delinquents, by way of breaking through the old mode of trial by jury; our liberties bartered in exchange for a revenue; and in ſhort ſo many innovations againſt liberty, and not one in its favour, that our "heaven "born miniſter," for whom I once felt a ſtrong predilection, reminds me in the uſe of his popularity, of our little boys in their new boots, who ſhow us how deep they dare to go into the dirt, without being over the tops. I ſhould have thought it might have been as well, if he had ſincerely made uſe of his popularity, while he had it, to effect ſome of thoſe good reforms he talked of, or at leaſt to have given the country a *commutation* for *TYTHES* as well as for *TEA*, which would have been, in my opinion, to the full as beneficial to the community, and far more popular; but public meaſures, without my going to church, often remind me of the old rubric, which, though a Diſſenter, I can but acknowledge to be in part peculiarly proper, at leaſt at this time; "we have done thoſe things which we "ought not to have done, and we have left undone "thoſe things which we ought to have done." The late parliament's rejection of our reaſonable requeſts, has had however, like all other bad things, a partially good effect; Diſſenters, heretofore divided into many forms and parties, taught by oppreſſion, are now united, and they all agree in equally

deteſting

deteſting *perſecution*, and in loving *general liberty*; they ceaſe to ſuſpect one another, finding they have a formidable enemy at their door in ſeveral bodies of the eſtabliſhed clergy.—I hope and truſt no regium donum, (which, to uſe archbiſhop Tillotſon's words on another occaſion, I wiſh we were well rid of) no crooked policy, or pretended change of temper in their bigotted enemies, will ever induce them to divide, nor (as one of our able defenders ſays) "bate a jot, of heart or hope; but ſtill bear "up, and ſteer right onward;" for (to quote lord "Coke) magna eſt veritas et prevalebit."

Having given you, Sir, ſo full an account of my public principles as a Diſſenter; I think I have only to ſtate as much of my private life as concerns the preſent buſineſs; for I would leave nothing behind that ſhould juſtify even the ſuſpicion of an enemy; and if you think me as "fair a ſample" of the Diſſenters, as you have given us of the clergy of France, I hope you will feel leſs alarm for "thoſe "bulwarks of the ſtate" when the Diſſenters apply next time, in as conſtitutional a way, to parliament to be reſtored to their civil rights with the reſt of their fellow-ſubjects; but ſhould nothing I can ſay, have the good effect of gaining your favour, an account of the inconveniences we Diſſenters experience, from the deſcrimination made by the Teſt Laws between common neighbours, may at leaſt mitigate the vehemence of your reſentment, (as well as that of ſome other gentlemen) when you come to know that if Diſſenters have made you *uneaſy*, the Teſt

Laws have given them *no pleaſure*, and by preventing their repeal you were at leaſt even with them, without the aggravation of your laboured and extravagant pamphlet, whatever cauſe of diſlike you may have to individuals among us; but you ſeem determined to force us under the feet of an implacable and affronted prieſthood. If you will permit us a choice of maſters, I (for one) ſhall infinitely prefer a *military* maſter, to a *monk*, though I would ſtill rather ſuffer the momentary inconveniences of a tumultuous mob, than enjoy the protection of a centinel, *always* at my door.—

I live in a market town, where the majority of the inhabitants are Diſſenters; that is, three or four times as many go to meeting as go to church; though there may be as many who go to neither, as go to both (and who being "born into your "church whether they will or no," of courſe belong to it) but then they are generally the poorer ſort of people; we never oppoſe the clergyman, or our epiſcopalian neighbours, in the choice of their church officers; nor do we interfere in the repairing, ornamenting, or diſpoſal of their church matters, though our numbers and opulence, give us a majority, if we chuſe to do ſo; nor as an individual have I ever examined the churchwarden's account: We make no difference in our voluntary ſubſcriptions and diſtributions among the poor, but give alike to all, without diſcrimination; and we are all I believe, with few exceptions, on good terms with our neighbours. I take care to have my own children

children educated in ſtern principles of juſtice, with as ſtrong a bias towards liberty as I am able to give them; but to be ſure with no friendly aſpect to an hierarchy; though with no degree of enmity to the perſons of the clergy of any denomination. I conſider (as I ſuppoſe other Diſſenters do) a youth as loſt, whoſe attention is turned to public money for a livelihood, inſtead of his own exertions by induſtry, frugality, and prudence: (not that I approve of being forced to this by a law that unjuſtly "ſhuts "the door," and ſtigmatizes me as unworthy of truſt;) we all I believe, conſider the common maxim, "When at Rome, do as they do at Rome," as dangerous to principle, though the ready way to preferment; and we prefer for our children, a virtuous, or *conſiſtent*, to a ſhining character; paying infinitely more attention to the fortiter in re, than to the ſuaviter in modo, or all lord Cheſterfield's graces. Yet we are not ignorant, Sir, that this plan of education naturally throws our youth into the back ſhades of the world, which is found, notwithſtanding all the illiberality againſt us, to be no unfriendly ſoil to virtue; and though theſe maxims and habits, render our manners leſs conciliating and popular, they are found not leſs uſeful to the community, nor the leſs friendly "to good order and a "juſt ſubordination" of rank, nor ought a good government to load ſuch ſubjects with peculiar hardſhips or oppreſſions, and then (as you cruelly do the poor, p. 359) ſend them "for their conſo-"lation to the final proportions of eternal juſtice." Had there been laws remaining in the ſtatute book

that

that we Diſſenters, like the poor negroes, ſhould all have worn thumb-ſcrews, and we had petitioned parliament for eaſe, we have too good grounds to believe that ſome of your clergy, and ſome of your corporations under their influence, would have found "danger to the church" in repealing ſuch bulwarks to the conſtitution, as they would have pretended had kept *us in ſubmiſſion*, and the *church in ſafety*, for centuries; imputing thus even our virtues to the worſt motives.

Deputy Birch, in his great wiſdom and eloquence (when the city of London, to which I have always looked with reverence as to a ſtrong pillar of civil liberty, diſgraced its magnificent corporation, by gratifying the ſacerdotal pride of a charity boy eccleſiaſtic chaplain, in joining a few archdeaconries and prieſt-ridden corporations in inſtructing their members to vote againſt us) was pleaſed to wonder, What the Diſſenters would have! Do they not worſhip God in their own way? &c. O yes, Mr. Deputy, we own we do this, and enjoy a great many more very good things; and ſince you have proved to us that we are "hunting the ſtag with the lion," and muſt ſubmit to the law of the ſtrongeſt, we ſhall perhaps learn to be more grateful that we are not ſtript of theſe privileges. We had formerly thought our being Engliſhmen entitled us to them *all*, but we now ſee what an *alliance* between church and ſtate can do. Courtiers, corporations, and prieſts (a threefold cord not eaſily broken) may refine in puniſhments, and perhaps in time

time we may have a Phalaris's brazen bull for "turbulent Diſſenters;" yet even then, ſome deputy Birch, or ſome ſavage prieſt, may aſk, What would theſe Diſſenters have? Do they not worſhip God in their own way? &c. At preſent we Diſſenters ſay we would have (if "that moſt "odious deſpotiſm, the tyranny of the many," as your coadjutor's at Coventry call it, did not prevent) the ſame law, the ſame liberty, and the ſame *eligibility* in all reſpects, as our countrymen and epiſcopalian neighbours, while we pay the ſame taxes, and perform the ſame ſervices: let deputy Birch ſatisfy an honeſt man, and a good heart, why we ſhould not? Or does he think the prieſts are entitled to ſo vaſt a ſacrifice as national juſtice, merely to ſatisfy their imaginary fears for epiſcopacy, which is certainly ſafe as long as the majority of the people, and the legiſlature, chuſe to keep it, and no longer, whether Diſſenters are reſtored to eligibility or not.—It is impoſſible for us to doubt whether we have a right to equal eligibility to honours and emoluments with other ſubjects, while we pay towards them, and have as much intereſt in them as other ſubjects, as far as things themſelves have a tendency to the general good, and no others, we think, ought to exiſt in a free country. But though we inſiſt we have this right, we Diſſenters in general, want none of your places, but we all hate to be badged, as every virtuous man ought; but your ſect of epiſcopalians, having all in this country born into it "whether they will or no," and having beſides many temptations to allure,

keep

keep the majority; and "it is your will and plea-"ſure," to badge all other ſects, not indeed "upon "the ſhoulder of the right ſleeve of the upper-"moſt garment, in an open and viſible manner, "with a large Roman P." as by the act of eighth and ninth of William III. chap. iii. ſect. 2. directs for your paupers, but in your books (p. 127) as "little, ſhrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud "and troubleſome, inſects of an hour," (that diſturb the black fat cattle that are feeding in part of our own paſture) and with one infinitely more *degrading* and galling in your acts of parliament, as NOT TO BE TRUSTED, which the proteſting Lords declare is next to *infamy*, and which you ſay, (p. 158) "is worſe than death;" and why? becauſe "ſuch is your will and pleaſure;" your prieſts will have it ſo, and ſome people are prieſt-ridden. Read St. John's repreſentation of a ſcene in the ſeventeenth of Revelations.

'Another of your coadjutors who writes againſt us, ſays, he thinks "the Diſſenters may by *juſt* re-"reflection (perhaps *juſt* running over your *juſt* "*reflections*, will be *juſt* as effectual) derive ſome "advantage from their *defeat*. In the expectation "of larger privileges, they appear in general to have "overlooked that COMPETENT MEASURE "of liberty, both civil and religious, which they "actually enjoy. The proſpect of repeal is cer-"tainly now more diſtant than ever; it is *natural* "for them therefore, as well as *prudent*, *to examine* "*their condition*, AS IT NOW STANDS, *with*

"*the*

" *the Teſt Acts in force:* a cool and diſpaſſionate " enquiry into this cannot well fail to produce " content."

Suppoſe therefore, Sir, in following this *friendly* advice " we coolly, and diſpaſſionately, examine a little further the condition of the Diſſenters, *as it* " *now ſtands with the Teſt Acts in force,*" without overlooking, " that competent meaſure of liberty " civil and religious, we Diſſenters now actually " enjoy; I think it " cannot well fail to produce " content," at leaſt in *you* and your *new* friends; as it will prove that with this " competent meaſure" of liberty, civil and " *religious,*" we Diſſenters " do " not lie on a bed of ROSES."

Many " lewd fellows of the baſer ſort," ſuch as troubled St. Paul in his day at *Theſſalonica*, are exceedingly fanatical ſtill, and are far from being civil to Diſſenters, either individually or at their places of worſhip, and not unfrequently diſturb them there, though not ſo much as to drive them to the civil power; and in truth our people have no great inclination to that reſource. Theſe lower ſort of men were almoſt the only kind of bigots I uſed to meet with before our late *defeat*, except now and then a prieſt, who if they are bigots are generally ſo to exceſs. A few years ago I was deſired to attend a clergyman, on a buſineſs he was ſuppoſed to have examined; being perſonally known to him, he fixed a time, and I waited on him with the reſpect due

due to a gentleman: Before he mentioned a word of the buſineſs I went on, he had the rudeneſs and ill manners to ſay to me, "Sir, I told the gentle-"man I thought you was not a proper perſon to be "employed in this matter, *as you are not of our* "*church*, but they chuſe it ſhould be ſo it ſeems." To which I anſwered, "religion had nothing to do "with the buſineſs, and as there was but little of it "any where, it was ſcarcely worth while to fall out "about it," or to that effect: I might have ſaid, none but knaves or fools introduce religion when they meet for buſineſs: (for this related no more to the church than to the navy.) The clergyman however did not chuſe to do any buſineſs that afternoon, though the time was fixed by himſelf, and I had gone ſeveral miles to attend him: He accordingly appointed me to call again the next day; intending by it, as I thought, to gratify himſelf and mortify a Diſſenter, in making me dance attendance after him. I can but ſuppoſe this gentleman's ideas of Diſſenters were very degrading, as I ſuſpect I was his ſuperior in fortune, but he no doubt felt his great ſuperiority in being of the eſtabliſhed religion; beſides he was one of "the better nature, a man put "over man, and approximated to perfection," and I was only a "mechanical country attorney."

But ſince the Diſſenters application to parliament the bigotry and ill temper of many perſons is much increaſed; the lower bigots that can write, amuſe themſelves with chalking "Teſt Act, 189," on

on our gates and doors, to remind us of your majority; and a Teſt Act gentleman for a Diſſenter, and a Shylock for a Jew, ſeem ſynonimous terms with many of our enemies, as implying equally baſe principles; as I am a ſufferer myſelf I naturally feel for others, and often very ſincerely lament, the brutal, inhuman treatment, thoſe induſtrious men meet with in all countries, and not the leaſt in our own; which treatment naturally tends to produce the profligacy we complain of, but in truth, *we heretics, jews,* turks, and infidels, to whom "the "corporation of Barnſtaple, and the churchwardens "of Bolton-le-Moors," and their "*numerous* and "*reſpectable*" partizans, are afraid to "*open a door*", are pretty well *looked after* by their *maſters* the clergy.

A gentleman of property, a magiſtrate, not twenty miles from me, a little time ſince, at a meeting of ſome truſtees of a turnpike road, propoſed among others, to be inſerted as additional truſtees, the name of a reſpectable diſſenting miniſter of the town, a D.D. too; but a church parſon being preſent exclaimed againſt it, expreſſing his wonder, that a gentleman (who had deſcended from a biſhop too) could make ſuch a propoſal. The gentleman not feeling any diſlike of Diſſenters, thought there was nothing amiſs in it, but meeting with ſo violent an objection, he dropped the propoſal; and thus we Diſſenters are generally ſacrificed in more important matters to the intolerance of your prieſts.

Another

Another clergyman, at a little farther diſtance, had in his pariſh a poor gardener who was a Diſſenter, but having lately had a child, there would of courſe have been a chriſtening, but for the toleration Act; however the clergyman, not chuſing to loſe his fees, called at the poor man's houſe, and finding the child ill, inſiſted on naming it; (ſee LXIX canon.) The poor woman begged he would not do ſo, as ſhe was a Diſſenter, and her huſband was not at home; but he ſtill perſiſting, ſhe intreated him to let her go for her huſband, but no delay could be obtained; the child might have died, as many things fall between the cup and the lip; he accordingly named the child, and I dare ſay it was not the worſe for it; but, as the ſcripture ſays, the labourer is worthy of his *hire*, ſo the clergyman demanded his pay, but the poor woman had got no money: the clergyman however knew how to pay himſelf, and he accordingly went into the poor man's garden, and cut ſome cabbages, which he kindly accepted in its ſtead; which was better by half than going to "country attorneys" or than troubling the ſpiritual court with ſuch a trifle. As the poor man was *ONLY a Diſſenter*, (as the man ſaid when he killed the *jew**) this affair only occaſioned

* Melchior Meizing, and Peter Gæhrmann a journeyman miller, at Allerſtein in the biſhopric of Ermeland, in Pruſſia, had for many years been acquainted with Tobias Moſes, a jew, of Crojanki, near Flataw, who had given Meizing credit for merchandize, and he had been uſed to lodge at Meizing's, when he came that way. The fortune of Meizing having decreaſed, he thought to enrich himſelf without trouble, and projected the murder of the jew: he mentioned the ſcheme to a woman who brought her ſon to conſent to aſſiſt; but who meeting with his death by an accident was prevented. Meizing therefore mentioned his deſign to the miller, who conſented to aſſiſt; and when

a little laughter, and nobody thought it worth while to complain.

But beſides the prieſts, ſome even of our better ſort of neighbours, who never before mentioned a word about difference in religion; thinking, I preſume, it was ill manners, as religion is a perſonal thing in which every man is to judge for himſelf; have ſince our *defeat* found their church zeal much increaſed; and their benevolence, or good manners, proportionably leſſened; perhaps it is a natural conſequence.

As I was riding on the road one evening laſt ſummer, I was overtaken by a gentleman I have known perfectly well for twenty years; to my ſurprize he introduced the Diſſenters application for a repeal of the Teſt Laws; and expreſſed wonderful pleaſure that the parliament had rejected it. The

when the jew came his round, the farmer and the miller way-laid the jew in a wood he was to paſs, and ſlew him with a wood bill. A youth apprentice to the jew, eſcaped from the murderers, and proclaimed the fact, and the officers of juſtice apprehended the offenders as they were quietly dividing the money they found upon the jew. They attemped neither to eſcape nor reſiſt, nor even to deny the fact, but actually appeared ſurprized that ſo much notice ſhould be taken of the death of a jew. Upon the firſt examination of the miller, who was a catholic, he *declared, that he had ever been an orderly man, and a good chriſtian; and that upon the day on which he had murdered the jew he had duly aſſiſted at morniug prayer, and had implored the aid of the bleſſed virgin Mary in the commiſſion of the deed.* He therefore expreſſed his hope, that as the perſon killed was *ONLY a jew*, the tribunal would pay no further attention to it. But the provincial tribunal at Hailſburg inſtituted a criminal proceſs againſt the murderers, when Meitzing was condemned to be broken on the wheel, Gærhmann to be beheaded, and the widow (who was privy to the crime) to many years impriſonment. This ſentence was confirmed by the king of Pruſſia, and in April, 1787, it was put in execution. *Gent. Mag. Nov.* 1788.

mention of this ſubject at this particular time, appeared to me a kind of "perſonal triumph over a "fallen" neighbour, whom I now found he conſidered as an enemy. I was concerned for the effect the clergy had produced; and preſuming his ideas are not ſingular, I will beg leave to ſtate a part of the converſation which followed, as ſome anſwer to thoſe who happen to think with him.

Churchman. I am glad with all my heart you Diſſenters did not get your *ends:* You are *a ſly ſort of folks.* I dare ſay you would never have taken all this trouble together if you had not ſome *ends* to anſwer.

Diſſenter. Why yes, Sir, we had ſome *ends* to anſwer to be ſure, or we ſhould not have applied to parliament at all; but we ſtated our *ends*; we wiſh to ſtand in the ſame ſituation as our neighbours, and why ſhould we not?

C. As to that there would be no great harm if that were all; but why cannot you let things keep as they are; what ſhould they alter any thing for?

D. That argument goes a great way; they have altered in time paſt you know; the country were once all Roman catholics; but you gentlemen condeſcend to ſay juſt what your prieſts bid you; your parſons are your maſters, ours are not ſo.

C. We need not go to hear them if we do not like them.

D. But you are obliged to pay them; we are not obliged to pay ours.

C. But

C. But *you* are obliged to pay *ours* that's the beſt on't: though you won't employ any but your own folks.

D. This is often ſaid by you gentlemen, but it is not true; you know ſome of them employ you, and I employ many tradeſmen, not Diſſenters, though there are ſome of the ſame trade in the town who are Diſſenters.

Having mentioned this ſubject, and being aware that the not employing any body but our own folks, is a common prejudice with many churchmen againſt Diſſenters, and is often caſt in our teeth; I ſhall here take the opportunity of ſaying, it is really not true to the degree that is pretended; yet no doubt Diſſenters, by being fellow ſufferers, equally ſtigmatized, and equalled burthened, with two modes of religion; worſhipping together in public, and of courſe more acquainted than with others who they meet with leſs frequently, know each other better, and may probably have a better opinion of each other than of ſtrangers. Is it therefore wonderful that they ſhould deal with each other? yet for this mere prejudice, Diſſenters are not unfrequently threatened, both in public and private, with an aſſociation of churchmen, not to deal with Diſſenters; and we are adviſed as the only means of preventing it, to mix more with our church neighbours; not making "common cauſe" together, as they ſay we do. It would be as well if theſe gentlemen would take a better method of effecting this end, if they think the mixing freely with one

another is a deſirable object, let them do us juſtice; repeal the penal ſtatutes, and bona fide declarations, as to religion, that ſtigmatizes and points us out as unworthy of truſt, and we have nothing to ſeparate about; articles of faith are every man's own; as little in our power (if we are ſincere) as the colour of our hair; and other men's faith as totally indifferent to us as the colour of their ſtockings; be it what it will, we are not affected by it. To our own maſter we all ſtand or fall: but this liberal mind, or liberal conduct, cannot be afforded; "*the ſly ſort of* "*people*" who direct in theſe matters have ſome other *ends* to anſwer, but which they do not openly avow (as we Diſſenters did); we therefore are kept under harrows and hatches; yet notwithſtanding this pharaoh-like wiſdom and afflictions, the Diſſenters both in this pariſh and neighbourhood, multiply and grow exceedingly, and (as I am informed) elſewhere, three or four new meeting-houſes at leaſt, have been built within five or ſix miles of us in the laſt few years.

Where Diſſenters increaſe, they of courſe extend themſelves into pariſhes and places, where before they were leſs, or not at all known; and in proportion as men are well or ill informed, or as the clergy, and leading men in the pariſh, are liberal or bigotted, it fares ill or well with them. In one pariſh not very far from where I reſide, the 'ſquire was a ſtaunch high churchman, and the curate of courſe not very liberal; a poor baptiſt teacher, who is a man of good natural ſenſe, a ſmall farmer, and

of

of good morals, uſed occaſionally to go on a ſummer's evening, to preach at the cottage-houſes of ſome of his uſual hearers and poor neighbours, which the parſon and 'ſquire diſapproved, and of courſe interdicted, at the ſame time informing the preacher and the people, "*nothing of that ſort ſhould* "*go on in their pariſh.*" Indeed, in former days, preaching was thought a formidable thing, when prieſts pretended "they could make their creator;" but at this day, when better ſenſe prevails, there ſeems nothing of importance in a little farmer, with a common ſhare of natural ſenſe a little above his labourers, teaching a few paupers, after finiſhing their work, the duties of man to man, or of man to God, as far as he underſtands it; at leaſt the intention ſeems commendable, it has one great advantage, that it can do no harm; his underſtanding and manners will be more congenial to his ſort of hearers, than elegant ſcholars, if ſuch would condeſcend to become their teachers: ſuch hearers want civilization to wean them from the wood-ſtack, and the ale-bench, and "the directors of the "public mind" ſent and paid by the ſtate, are too much engaged another way, to attend to this ſort of people *, and if perchance any one of them does

* "The ignorance and profligacy of the lower ranks in England are, perhaps with ſome juſtice, attributed to the inattention of their paſtors."

"It is of little conſequence that a wretched curate is left, with a pitiful ſalary, to conn over the leſſons of the day, or to preach a cold and lifeleſs ſermon upon Sunday, whilſt his proud ſuperior is amuſing himſelf in the capital, or wandering from one watering-place to another, in ſearch of pleaſure and preferment."

"But if it is thought dangerous or impolitic to carry theſe principles into effect, yet ſurely the clergy ought no longer to be ſuffered

ſo, he is immediately nicknamed by his brethren, a field preacher, and is ſhunned like a Diſſenter.—But a plain layman, unprejudiced by an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, would ſee nothing to diſcommend in this little farmer's affair, nothing to ſend a man "to "the *gallies*" or a "*whipping houſe*" for, though he might ſmile at the ruſtic efforts of ſuch untaught eloquence, but not being compelled to *hear*, or to *pay*, one would think ill-nature itſelf could not be much diſpleaſed; but, alas! preaching is a ſolemn thing, and by the XXXVIth canon of the church, "none are to preach unleſs licenſed by the biſhop;" and grave judges have been neceſſitated ſolemnly to determine at Weſtminſter-Hall, that a man muſt not preach, in his own houſe, to any except his own family. One would be provoked to aſk, what this ſame preaching is? We read ſermons at home, when we meet with any worth the trouble, to whom we pleaſe; the difference then lies in the perſon who ſpeaks the words, like the conſecration of the elements, mentioned in the act thirtieth Henry VIII. To common ſenſe, preaching ſeems talking; let

to engroſs any part of the national income. In the reign of queen Ann, a popular cry was raiſed in favour of the church, of which a party in oppoſition took advantage to overturn the adminiſtration of the day, and in recompence thereof an act was paſſed by the influence of the new miniſters; in conſequence of which, the firſt fruits and tenths, a part of the revenue of the crown, were taken from the public, and appropriated to the augmentation of the ſmaller clerical benefices." "———The ſtate of that fund has of late years been carefully concealed; but it probably yields at preſent from 40 to 50,000l. per annum; and ſurely if the ſmall livings of the church required to be augmented, it is not from the revenue belonging to the crown and public, but from the church itſelf, where its emoluments are confeſſedly too great, that the addition ought to be demanded."

Sir John Sinclair, p. 198.

every

every man then talk and ſay on, where's the harm, only do not *compel* me to hear; as dean Tucker very wiſely ſays on another occaſion, "*enable*, but "*not compel:*" but this would not do for holy church. Mankind ſeem to me to have been hardly dealt with by the clergy; pay if you do not come, would ſatisfy a player, or any other ſhowman, but not ſome other folks; you muſt come and ſtay all over; and if you *hold opinion* that you do not like it, or any way *oppugn* a certain book, or the ſervice, or the men, though you do no one thing to diſturb; Why, what then? Why let him be ipſo facto excommunicated, and not reſtored but by renouncing his wicked errors. Well, and what then? Why forty days after "out flieth" a writ de excommunicato capiendo; what archbiſhop Bancroft calls "the church's chiefeſt temporal ſtrength:" and formerly after that, a writ de heretico comburendo; but old Oliver's days gave people a diſreliſh of the latter writ; and holy church was conſtrained to ſee a repeal of this "bulwark" at the reſtoration (an age not over fraught with liberty), and not two hundred years ſince; ſo that I hope you, Sir, will admit we are "a little" though "not much *altered* in four hundred years." By the XIIth canon it is ordained, that "whoever ſhall "affirm, that it is lawful for any ſort of miniſters "and lay perſons, or of either of them, to join to-"gether and make rules, orders, or conſtitutions, "in cauſes eccleſiaſtical, without the king's autho-"rity, and ſhall *ſubmit themſelves to be* ruled and "governed by them, let them be excommunicato

" ipſe facto, and not be reſtored, until they repent " and publicly revoke thoſe their " *anabaptical* " errors." I do not ſuppoſe this preaching baptiſt farmer, nicknamed by your church " anabaptiſt," was much acquainted with *church-law*; but having often heard of the Toleration Act, he ſuppoſed his conduct authorized by it, and he of courſe continued to go once a week or fortnight, as beſt ſuited himſelf and the people; this preſbyterian ſpirit of perſeverance ſo irritated the curate, that he procured a ſummons from a neighbouring parſon and another juſtice, for the teacher and ſeven of his hearers, ſix of whom were day-labourers, requiring their attendance at the juſtice-meeting the next Saturday. A law-paper to theſe kind of men is little ſhort of a death-warrant, and they applied in great haſte and conſternation, to ſome wealthy Diſſenters for advice, expecting of courſe to be *burnt as heretics*, as I happened to be known to their friends, I was applied to, and accordingly attended the culprits to the juſtices. Very happily for theſe poor Diſſenters, a liberal-minded benevolent gentleman, *then a member of the laſt parliament*, attended the meeting as one of the juſtices (but who had not ſigned the ſummonſes) and only he, and the clergyman that did were preſent; on ſeeing ſo many men come into the room at once, this gentleman ſeemed to ſuſpect there had been a riot; on which as near I can recollect the following diſcourſe, or to this effect, paſſed:

Juſtice. What do all theſe people attend here for?

Church

Church Clerk. Sir, they do not worſhip according to our church.

J. Who are you?

C. C. The church clerk of ——

J. What do you mean, who are they? are they Diſſenters?

C. C. Yes, Sir?

J. Do they make any diſturbance, or occaſion any riot, or noiſe?

C. C. No, Sir.

J. What the devil do you bring them here for then?

C. C. Sir, my maſter ordered me?

J. Who is your maſter?

C. C. Mr. ——— Sir, the curate.

J. Where is he? go and fetch him.

The church clerk accordingly went out, but I ſuſpect the curate had ſmelt a rat, and had abſconded, for the poor clerk could not find his maſter. The clergyman who ſigned the ſummonſes, and had (I imagine) learned of his order *to lie by* for miſchief, took up a volume of Burn's Juſtice, and ſhewed this gentleman the ſtatutes of king Charles II. which ſubjected Diſſenters to numerous penalties, for what many of us ſectaries do every week, without intending any contumacy; and after reading one of the acts, delivered a noble ſentiment had it been urged in the cauſe of juſtice and humanity: "We ſit here not as legiſlators but as "magiſtrates to execute the laws already made; "and here are acts of parliament that ſubject theſe "men

"men to penalties for attending conventicles, let "them ſhew whether they have complied with "the act of William and Mary." To which the gentleman anſwered, "There are acts in the book "too againſt *witches*, but none of us think of "putting them in force; theſe acts were made on "the ſpur of the occaſion, but that occaſion is now "over:" and he deſired the men might go about their buſineſs. As the poor men were brought there by legal ſummons, by a ſort of men that I knew where no friends, I thought it prudent to deſire the juſtice's clerk would adminiſter the oaths to them, as the toleration act, the tenth of Ann requires, which they were willing to take; for which I paid the fees, and which was a legal acquittal from the complaint; after which the poor men were diſmiſſed. At this gentleman's requeſt I paid the conſtable's expences for ſummoning and attending, as the proſecutors refuſed, and the poor men could not be compelled. The magiſtrate particularly requeſted the Diſſenters would not exult, or ſhew any reſentment; of which I aſſured him there was no ſort of danger. A Diſſenter is always happy enough without triumphing, or aſking for wages, if as "things now ſtand with the Teſt Acts in force," he can get his head out of the wolf's mouth, without having it bitten off. I remember I parted from this magiſtrate with the pleaſing hope that I found in him, as "fair a ſample" of parliament men, as I think you will find in me of Diſſenters, and I truſt you will never meet with any thing like my diſappointment.

That

That this intolerant ſpirit is not confined to that pariſh; I will relate another inſtance or two of great diſlike manifeſted by ſome of the clergy to us Diſſenters.

Two poor men a few miles from me, lived in a ſort of double tenement, which by ſome accident was burnt down. The poor men having loſt their little all, applied to their rector (a magiſtrate *of courſe*) for a licenſe to aſk charity; the right to grant it is not now in queſtion: one of the men met with no refuſal, but the other was told he was never ſeen at church; he pleaded that he went to meeting; this was, as Yorick ſays, "touching the ſtring on "which hung all his ſorrows;" he had of courſe no encouragement. On his making his caſe known to myſelf, and other Diſſenters in the neighbourhood, we thought the poor man ought not to ſuffer for his principles, and we inſtantly made up his loſs.

It may be imagined there were ſome ſhades of difference in the characters of theſe two paupers, to juſtify this apparent partiality in their rector, who had the pay appropriated by the ſtate "for the cure "of both their ſouls," as much as if there were no toleration; and to a mind not overcome with prejudice, the mere diſſent of a labourer ſeems ſcarcely ſufficient to apologize for unkindneſs in charity; but certainly not ſufficient to warrant partiality in a magiſtrate. The fact is this: The church pauper had been a little farmer; and while ſuch, I have ſeen his team of horſes in his waggon tyed late in an

an evening to an alehouſe door: and have been informed, he frequently kept them in that ſituation all night, pretending always to be going, which prevented the humanity of others from releaſing the poor horſes: by a general conduct ſimilar to this you may imagine he ſoon became inſolvent, and was broken up by his landlord, he has of courſe ever ſince been a labourer; but having no family, though leſs able to get drunk, he remains as far as I have heard, as profligate as ever, and I ſtrongly ſuſpect has not been at church ſix times in twenty years. The other pauper, who went to meeting, had a family of, I think, ſeven children; he regularly attended public worſhip at the meeting-houſe every Sunday; was a ſober ſteady labourer, troubleſome to no one, and neither took or aſked relief from his pariſh. The churchwarden of my pariſh, who happened to be my client, and of whom I aſked ſome particulars, informed me, this Diſſenter was the beſt labourer in their pariſh, and added, "if "going to meeting would make all our poor men "like him I wiſh to God they all went." Yet, Sir, this rector is a ſcholar far better than I am able to judge of; but he was educated *at Oxford*, and there ſeems ſomething radically wrong, as expoſed to general juſtice and civil liberty, in the education of their prieſts. How is it then, Sir, that you can exult, that our education in all ſtages from infancy to manhood is in the hands of the eccleſiaſtics?

In another village only a few miles diſtant, where every farmer except the rector's tenant is a Diſſenter,

Diſſenter; (and we have ſeveral ſuch villages not far off) this rector ſent the tenant round to give notice to all the pariſhioners, to ſet out their great and ſmall tythes in kind; who in his rounds ſaid to one of the pariſhioners, "If you dare to eat an egg "before it is tythed, my maſter will put you into "the exchequer:" and of others, "my maſter will "bleed them at every vein." Tythes in kind were accordingly ſet out, even to cabbages in the garden. In this very pariſh I have known five different rectors, but not one ever reſided in my time; and yet theſe litigious, fly ſort of Diſſenters, who were to be exchequered and bled, never retaliated on their rector; never ſued him for non-reſidence. In this ſame pariſh "ſome charitable dole," (whether of ſome old roman catholic, or churchman, or neither, I know not) was diſtributed by the curate at the pariſh church a ſhort time ſince; one labouring man's wife went with the reſt, but when ſhe applied for her ſhare, ſhe was told, ſhe was to have none, for ſhe was a Diſſenter: the poor woman had it ſeems, when ſingle, lived in the ſervice of one of the diſſenting farmers in the town, and it is poſſible, might on a Sunday in the ſummer have gone a few miles to the meeting-houſe, but ſhe knew no more about diſſenting than ſhe did of Mahommedaniſm; nor after ſhe left her ſervice ever went to meeting that I have heard of; but having once been there it was contamination enough in the noſtrils of an intolerant prieſt. Being refuſed the dole, the poor woman returned home empty; and not knowing what the word *Diſſenter* meant, which the clergyman

uſed

uſed when he refuſed her the bread, ſhe went over to her maſter's ſon (her old maſter being dead) and aſked him for an explanation, but ſhe was as bad an etymologiſt as ſhe was a polemic, for ſhe remembered only the two laſt ſyllables, *ſenter*; of courſe the young maſter not being able to divine, could no ways ſatisfy his poor neighbour, unleſs ſhe meant "century," which was an hundred years; no, ſhe ſaid, that could not be what the parſon meant, for ſhe was not an hundred years old; but on her explaining the whole buſineſs, the farmer got to underſtand, that her having lived in the family of a Diſſenter had rendered her unfit for the dole of "*holy church.*"

I will only mention one more inſtance:—A Diſſenter, whom I knew very well, not exceſſively attached to diſſent, but had been brought up that way, married the daughter of a churchman in the next pariſh, and wanting a farm, he applied to a clergyman a few miles diſtant who had one to let; all ſeemed very well, for the wife's family at leaſt were very well known, and there ſeemed a proſpect of getting through the bargain; but before the tenant called a ſecond time, the parſon had heard that his intended tenant was a Diſſenter; when he therefore called again, the parſon told him he ſhould not have the farm: "I find you are a Diſ-"ſenter; we have none of that ſort in the pariſh "now, and I will take care not to introduce any." —The ſame clergyman, ſome few years before, was converſing with a gentleman, when ſomething about toleration

toleration was mentioned, on which the clergyman exclaimed, " That is the devil, *one cannot order a* " *fellow to church*, but he tells you he goes to " meeting."—This gentleman I preſume, Sir, muſt be perfectly to your caſt; he would *order* a fellow to church, and if he did not go, he would *order* him to the " whipping-houſe," or perhaps to the " gallies." You may be ſatisfied he had lofty ideas of the dignity and majeſty of the church, " of her " high magiſtrates and mitred fronts," and who of courſe would feel no inſuperable objection (p. 153) to exerciſe, in ſome caſes, *ſomething like an authority* over the " wealthy and powerful of long ſtanding, " as well as over the newly fortunate;" though as an individual I ſhould " think it better (as you ſay) " to cheriſh virtue and humanity, by leaving much " to free will:" " but man! proud man! (dreſſed " in a little brief authority) plays ſuch fantaſtic " tricks."———

I could mention other inſtances of intolerance towards Diſſenters; and were all ſtated that have happened both here and elſewhere, I dare ſay they would appear enormous.---" The Rev. Dr. Croft, " late fellow of univerſity college, vicar of Arm- " cliffe, maſter of the grammar ſchool in Breewood, " and chaplain to the earl of Elgin," in his printed Sermon, " *calls on*" his brethren, the " wiſe and " honeſt churchmen to *declare what is to be known* of " us Diſſenters in the ſeveral places where we *abound*, " as an ANTIDOTE TO THE POISON *we* " *are continually dealing out*," and thinks he ſhall find

find us *very much diſliked* among our better ſort of neighbours: I do not mean to imitate the Doctor's bad ſpirit and temper, in "declaring all that is to "be known" of his order, but have concerned myſelf no further with them, than their conduct concerns us Diſſenters *as ſuch*, or quoad, as the lawyers ſay; but ſhould the Doctor's brethren of the cloth hear his CALL, and declare "*all about*" us poor ſectaries, his zeal for the church, and their malignity againſt Diſſenters, may poſſibly find many inſtances of weakneſs and *folly* among our people; I truſt they will find *few* of *injuſtice* or oppreſſion; and I defy them all to produce *one* of diſloyalty and rebellion, notwithſtanding their baſe inſinuation of our *modern* loyalty; no Diſſenter is ſo mad, or unwiſe, as to think of reſiſting the civil power; they would riſk their lives in ſupport of it; they are not ſo intemperate as to propoſe any degree of violence againſt the eſtabliſhed church, whatever treatment they meet with from a bigotted clergy.

If in our journeyings, we fall among thieves, that wounds us, and ſtrip us, and leave us half dead, we are not ſo ignorant as to hope for oil and wine, from prieſts and levites (an order, that in all countries, are the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever;) we patiently wait the paſſing by of ſome Samaritan, and to our great comfort, we know there are hundreds of thouſands of ſuch "in the "congregation of faithful men." To theſe good Samaritans, Sir, we Diſſenters look with an ardent wiſh, to be able by all peaceable and conſtitutional means,

means, to inform them of our *principles*, and our *hardſhips*, firmly believing, that when *both* are underſtood *by them*, we ſhall be relieved in all we care about. If Dr. Croft, or his brethren, ſhould perſevere "in declaring what is to be known of us "Diſſenters where we abound;" as I doubt not they will take care to ſuppreſs all that is to our advantage, I would juſt hint to the doctor, that I have a few anecdotes of his *own order* that may do to preſerve the equipoiſe of their veſſel, and prevent its being overſet by having the weight all on one ſide, though they will not contribute much to illuſtrate the *good manners*, the *temperance*, or the *decency* of ſome of his order; but I ſhall not trouble you or him with their rehearſal, unleſs as you ſay, to ſave their veſſel if they ſet it afloat.

I preſume I ſhall have proved to thoſe who read and believe what I have written, that "without "having overlooked that competent meaſure of "civil and religious liberty we now actually enjoy," the condition of us Diſſenters may fail of producing in us *content*; to what degree of degradation your Coventry coadjutor's "*moſt odious deſpotiſm, the ty-*"*ranny of the many*," may chuſe to reduce us (the minority) I cannot tell. If you leave it to your prieſts "*to play the engines upon us a little*," you will indeed convince us, that (as *Cato* ſays) "this world "is made for Cæſar." Or ſhould you baniſh us from the (p. 197) "ſeductive circean liberty" we Diſſenters now actually enjoy, with the Teſt Acts in force, "we hope in God" (to uſe the Yorkſhire

clergy's words) a few hours ſailing will give us (p. 199) "real liberty, if ſhe is to be purchaſed at "no other price."

I have taken a great number of occaſional intermiſſions from my profeſſional engagements to write thus far, and have written with, perhaps, leſs order and connection than yourſelf. I wiſh for the ſake of a good cauſe I could have written in a more able manner. I have left many things unſaid that the cauſe of diſſent calls for; and have mentioned others which might have been ſaid better, if gentlemen of ſuperior qualifications would have given themſelves the trouble, or would have ſacrificed an eccleſiaſtical intereſt that too much pervades our profeſſion. I had thought of ſhewing the wonderful *difference* there is between the writings of our preſent church dignitaries, and thoſe of the laſt two reigns; and the no leſs wonderful *ſimiliarity* between the abuſe of us Diſſenters, in your pamphlet, Sir, and the abuſe of the old whigs in the old *Examiner*, of the laſt year of queen Ann; extracts from that of the twelfth of January, and particularly the *firſt of March*, 1713, *No.* 27, I had copied for you; but I find I have already written a long letter, *more*, perhaps, *than you or your coadjutors will read*, but ſufficient to prove, that Diſſenters are much injured and depreſſed, by many of an order of men that, *as ſuch*, do not, I think, deſerve the public favour; nor if they perſevere in their late ſpirit, will they deſerve the public confidence if they have it. I deſpair of gaining the ear, ſtill more the help of the

intereſted,

intereſted, or *indifferent*; the firſt will not hear, the laſt do not care; and theſe two deſcriptions of men form a vaſt bulk of the community. But as I am a believer in revelation, and of courſe live in the hope of a better ſtate of things: a millenium (not a fifth monarchy, Sir, of enthuſiaſts and fanatics) but a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteouſneſs; or to drop the eaſtern figure, and uſe a more philoſophic language, a ſtate of equal liberty and equal juſtice for all men; I foreſee we Diſſenters have only to convince the good Samaritans among our lay brethren, that we have no ſort of difference with them about any religious opinions, or doctrines whatever, deſiring the ſame liberty for all that we aſk for ourſelves; and could we detach the wiſe and good from their intereſted, bigotted prieſts, or (as the author of the Origin of Evil I have quoted, ſays) "the *knaves* and *fools* that "are among them," a glorious prophecy would be fulfilled in our time; all honeſt men would be friends, "*the lion would lie down with the lamb, and a* "*nation would be born in a day.*"

Having ſhewn the temper of ſome of the clergy towards us Diſſenters, I may be allowed, (I hope without offence) before I quit my ſubject, to mention my ſincere concern, at the late exceſſive increaſe of juſtices of the peace, from that order; I know this circumſtance, as well as the increaſe of their power in other caſes, is not much liked, but rather complained of by many of their own church; who feel little of that reverence for prieſts

that

that you talk of. A county ſeſſions in ſome parts of England, appears now like a ſynod *all in black*, and many country gentlemen (probably from feeling their conſequence annihilated by the numbers on the bench of that order, who generally hang together) abſent themſelves entirely; of courſe the direction of the county gets into their hands: a worthy relation of mine, who is no ſectary, and I have many ſuch "in the con-"gregation of faithful men," was telling me the laſt month, he had been to his county ſeſſions, where he could but obſerve there came on the bench ten clergymen, all magiſtrates, before one country gentleman appeared. What proſpect, Sir, has a layman with ſuch a bench, if a queſtion ariſes that affects the order? What hope will a Diſſenter, or to uſe your own language (p. 304) "ſtrangers "and the minority of routed parties" entertain of a *patient* hearing? Yet (p. 351) the "magiſtrate "muſt have his reverence and the laws their "authority." I am far from wiſhing we had no ſuch juſtices; we have ſome of our moſt active and acceſſible magiſtrates that are clergymen; and were conſervators of the peace elective, as they were in better days, I doubt not but ſome of theſe gentlemen would be unanimouſly choſen. Almoſt every ſeſſions of parliament adds to the power of juſtices, and what ought ſtill more to affect (p. 335) "truly "patriotic, free, and independant ſpirits, who find "employment enough in guarding what they poſ-"ſeſs from violation," is; that moſt of thoſe acts deny a certiorari, ſhutting up Weſtminſter-Hall, where

where (p. 307) "an awful tribunal not only affords "protection to all officers in the legal exerciſe of "their functions, but alſo finds coercion if they "treſpaſs againſt their legal duty;" thereby preventing all appeals from the deciſions of theſe local courts. Diſſenters do not think the clergy in general their friends; of courſe they dread going where they determine every thing, and the Teſt Act allows none of our men of fortune, however great or good, (not even a Mr. Howard) a ſeat on the Bench, to ſecure to our poor, a reaſonable attention; but it ſeems determined, that Diſſenters ſhall be mortified for their whig principles.

Should ſome fortuitous unaccountable jumble of events, throw me, an obſcure individual, into the preſence of a great and venerable ſtate character, (an honour I never aſpired to) and he, like king Ahaſuerus, ſhould condeſcend to encourage my petition, by aſking my requeſt, I would, "if not "quite ſhrunk (p. 347) from my natural dimen-"ſions, by a degraded and ſordid" [Teſt,] "fitted "only to low and vulgar deceptions, aſſay" to throw off the humble and degraded feelings forced on us Diſſenters, by excluding us from our civil rank; (for magnanimity has the keeneſt ſenſe of ſhame) I would, I ſay, call to my recollection, that public juſtice is the ſtrongeſt cement of ſociety, and that (p. 138) "all perſons poſſeſſing any portion of the "collective ſovereignty, ought to be ſtrongly and "awfully impreſſed with an idea that they act in "truſt, and are accountable even here for the abuſe

"of

" of it;" and with a modeſt, diſtant reſpect, due to ſuch a character from one in my humble condition, moſt ardently ſue for this ONE THING, " that he would be pleaſed to take effectual care " to ſecure to all deſcriptions of peaceable ſubjects, " an entire confidence in the open, ready courſe " of equal, impartial, inflexible *public juſtice*; and " as carefully to avoid ſuffering any intereſts, how- " ever great or powerful, or any temporary politics, " however preſſing, from furniſhing any portion of " the people, or any honeſt man whatever, any " fair ground to deſpair of this juſtice;" and having ſaid this, I would make my bow, and retire.

I am, Sir,

With the greateſt deference to your civil ſtation,

And reſpect to your abilities and rank in ſociety,

Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

A Diſſenting Country Attorney.

March 14, 1791.

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